

THE ARGOSY.

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LADY GRACE.

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CHAPTER XI.

MYSTIFICATION.

CHARLES BAUMGARTEN sat in his chambers, Pump Court, Temple, enjoying an animated discussion with his friend, Jephson, the great Chancery lawyer. About a week had gone by since Charles had come home from Circuit and held that momentous interview with Mary Dynevor which had been broken in upon by the Sub-dean. Mary had now gone, with some friends, to Brighton for change of air, and Charles was, so to say, a bachelor at large again. The change from despair to hope had so elated him that he had somewhat rashly likened it to Elysium. For on this morning, a matter had occurred not at all in harmony with the ease said to be the portion of the denizens of the Elysian Fields. A certain ugly-looking bill for eighty-one pounds, bearing Charles's acceptance, had been presented to him for payment.

Charles declined to pay it, on the ground that he had not accepted it. He repudiated the bill altogether. It was held by that eminent legal firm, Godfrey and Herbert Jephson; the latter of whom had now come to Pump Court in person, bringing the bill with him.

"I never saw it in my life until to-day," protested Charles Baumgarten. "You have been imposed upon."

Mr. Jephson laughed. In days gone by, they had been very intimate at the University together, and had there formed a close friendship: though Herbert Jephson was the elder by some years. "Stuff and nonsense!" quoth he; "would you deny your own signature? Look at it."

Charles had looked enough at it, but looked again. "I don't deny that it's a clever imitation, except in one particular. This is signed 'C. Baumgarten:'. I always sign 'Charles' in full. Look over my notes to you, Jephson, should you have kept any, and see if I ever signed myself in any other way."

"If you never did it before, that's no reason why you might not have done it on this occasion," was the unanswerable response.

"I have never done it," returned Charles. "Now, consider, Jephson. You have known me well for two years; Godfrey knows me: do you think it likely that I would repudiate a bill of my own acceptance? Am I capable of it?"

"It is scarcely possible to believe so. But there *is* the bill."

"And if it were mine, I would take it up, did it involve a sum that would ruin me. Do you remember that bill in my college days, which was such a nightmare to me; and some of you wanted me to plead minority and get rid of it?"

"And you stuck out for honour, and declined the advice, and went into unheard of straits to take it up. I remember."

"Well, Jephson, that bill was a life's lesson to me. I declare to you that I have never given another or accepted one. I don't believe I ever shall."

The bill, dated London, was drawn a month ago. Charles could not plead that he was then on Circuit, as he ought to have been. It was a curious coincidence that at the date of the bill he was in London, having run up for a couple of days upon some intricate law business, which without him was at a standstill.

"How do you say it came into your hands, Jephson?" he asked.

"We received it from White, the engraver and jeweller," was the reply. "Some property White is entitled to get thrown into Chancery, and we have been acting for him. The expenses are draining him, and he had some difficulty to pay our last bill of costs. My brother pressed for it: one can't work for nothing: and White brought this bill of yours, and asked if we would take it in payment. Godfrey did so, and handed White the balance."

"You ought to have doubted how a bill of mine should get into a jeweller's hands."

"Not at all," drawled Jephson, who was exceedingly indolent in manner and speech. "Rather likely hands for a gentleman's bill to get into, I should say. White told us the bill was given for jewellery you had bought."

"Jewellery!" retorted Charles. "All the jewellery I have bought in the last six months is a silver pencil case—if you can call that jewellery; and for that I gave seven shillings and paid at the time. I am not likely to lay out eighty-one pounds in jewellery: I am laying by for something far more important than that."

"Well, what's to be done?"

"Nothing—as far as I am concerned. You'll not get me to pay a bill I've never seen or heard of."

"We must protest it, Baumgarten."

"I can't help that."

They came to no satisfactory conclusion. And Mr. Jephson departed, taking the bill with him: declaring to the last, in his idle,

joking manner, that the bill was undoubtedly Charles Baumgarten's and might have been accepted in his sleep.

Charles was busy all day. After snatching his dinner in the evening, he went out to call upon the elder of the two Jephsons; for, in spite of his assertion that he should do nothing, the affair was giving him concern, and he determined to look into it. Godfrey Jephson lived in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn; a keen, grasping man was he, quite a contrast to his brother Herbert. He was in his dining-room, but came out of it at once to Mr. Baumgarten.

"It is incomprehensible to me how you can deny the signature," he said, entering upon the matter at once. "If you saw my signature, or Herbert's, you would know them, would you not?"

"Yes. But —"

"And we, in the same way, know yours," he interrupted. "I recognised it the moment I saw it. White is a respectable man; there's not a more upright tradesman in the city of London; he is not one to say you accepted the bill, if you did not. It is most strange that you should disown it, Mr. Baumgarten."

"Did White tell you I accepted it?"

"He told Herbert. I have not had time to see him."

"Go with me to him now," suggested Charles. "He will not say to my face that I have bought jewellery of him and paid him with a bill. I never saw the man in my life to my knowledge and never was inside his shop."

Godfrey Jephson, his interest and curiosity aroused, agreed to the proposal; and they proceeded in the dusk of the spring evening to the jeweller's, in one of the leading thoroughfares. A shopman was standing at the door.

"Mr. White in?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"You go forward first," whispered Charles, "and enter upon it. I should like to watch his countenance. I'll come and confront him at the right time."

A smile, that caused Charles to knit his brow, crossed Mr. Jephson's face as he advanced to the jeweller. The shop was brilliant with gas. Charles sat down near the entrance, as if to wait for his friend.

"This bill," began Godfrey Jephson, taking it from his pocket-book, "was due to-day, and presented for payment. Mr. Baumgarten refuses to take it up. He says it is a forgery."

"But how can Mr. Baumgarten say that?" returned the jeweller, after a few moments given to what looked like astonishment. "He accepted the bill in my presence."

"Mr. Baumgarten says that he does not know you, and that he never was in your shop to his recollection," continued the lawyer.

"Why, how is it possible that he can assert so palpable a falsehood?" retorted Mr. White. "He was here when he bought the

jewellery, and has been in once or twice besides. Let me come face to face with him, Mr. Jephson, and you'll see whether he will dare deny it. He must and shall pay the bill."

Charles Baumgarten walked slowly forward, and the jeweller's eyes fell upon him. "Why, that—that— is Mr. Baumgarten!" he uttered, though in a tone of hesitation.

"Yes; I am Charles Baumgarten. There's some mistake here, Mr. White, that I cannot understand. How is it that you told Mr. Jephson we have had dealings together?"

"Because we have had them," returned the jeweller. "The question is, how is it that you deny it? I recognise you fully now, sir. You purchased several articles of jewellery of me and paid me with this bill."

"I never bought a shilling's worth of jewellery of you in my life," replied Charles Baumgarten. "But if I had, I should not have been likely to pay you by a bill. If I bought jewellery, I should pay you in cash for it."

"And that is what you were going to do, sir: there's no doubt you came in with the intention of paying it," returned Mr. White. "You asked me to make the account out, and I did so. You laughed when you looked at the sum total, it was so much more than you had thought for; and you took out your pocket-book and counted the bank notes in it, and then said you had not much more than half enough with you and the shortest way would be to draw a short bill, say at a month's notice. I had no objection. I took a bill stamp from my desk, drew out the bill, and you accepted it at this very counter."

"It is all news to me," replied Charles. "I repeat to you, Mr. White, that I never was in this shop before to-night. I never signed or saw the bill; I never bought any jewellery here whatever."

The jeweller appeared mystified. Certainly Charles Baumgarten did not look like a man who would deny his own responsibility; moreover, the young barrister's irreproachable character was well known. Yet Mr. White knew that he had come in and bought the jewellery.

"You may as well seek to persuade me that the sun never shone, Mr. Baumgarten," he remarked. "Why, after the transaction was over, and while my man was putting up your purchases, did you not come into that room at the back there, and drink a glass of old Madeira? You complained of feeling chilled, and I persuaded you to take it."

"It is altogether absurd!" retorted Charles, vexed at the words. "I never did anything of the sort, and you must be mistaking me for someone else. Had I bought jewellery, I should have paid for it in cash, I tell you; not by a bill."

"You took one glass of old Madeira at White's," observed Jephson as they walked up the street; "I think you must have taken *two* before you went there."

"I see you believe White, and not me."

"There's no possibility of disbelieving White. Whereas you—why, Baumgarten, it is your own handwriting! Shall you take up the bill?"

"No. It is none of mine."

"What shall you do?" asked Mr. Jephson.

"I shall sleep upon it; and perhaps have a quiet word with a gentleman-detective."

As he gained Pump Court, having wished Godfrey Jephson good-evening, and turned into it in a brown study, a whistle high up greeted him. Gazing upwards, Charles perceived the face and whiskers of a friend of his looking out from the window of some chambers not far from his own.

"Hi, Baumgarten! Come up."

"Can't. Have some work to do."

"Then take the consequences."

A shower of something liquid was in preparation of descent. Charles Baumgarten made a dash, and disappeared up the stairs. Peter Chester—a grandson of that old Mr. Chester who was once Rector of Great Whifton, though the reader may have forgotten him—received Charles with a basin of hot soup in his hand.

"You'd have caught it nicely, Charley, basin and all! Just look at the precious stuff she concocts for a fellow, dying, pretty near, of an inflamed throat! I told her beef-tea, and she goes and makes this."

Charles knew of the storms that Peter Chester, who, like himself, lived in his chambers for economy's sake, and his old laundress had together. "Is your throat no better?" he asked.

"Much you care whether it's better or worse!" retorted Peter Chester, a slight young man, with a delicate face and blue eyes. "I'd never go from my word, Baumgarten. You promised to come in and sit with a fellow last night, but deuce a bit came you."

"I added 'if I could,' Peter."

"Well, if you could not—that's to say, as you did not—you might have sent Joe in to tell me so. Just get ill yourself, and see how lively your evenings would be with your throat in flannel, expecting a fellow who never comes!"

"I was coming in at eight o'clock, when old Tomkins called in, and asked me to give him a glass of wine, while he talked over old times. Every quarter of an hour I thought he'd go; instead of which he stuck on till eleven o'clock and finished the bottle."

"You'll shine at the Bar, Charley, when you can invent a white lie after that rapid fashion, and stare a man in the face as you tell it."

"Tomkins was in my chambers."

"Tomkins might be. But you were not."

"What do you mean, Peter?"

Peter Chester was looking at him, and laughing in a most provoking manner. "I don't see why you should make a mystery of

it, Baumgarten," he said. "If you did choose to go out to enjoy yourself, instead of passing the evening with a sick chum, there's no reason why you should not admit it."

"Admit what?" asked Charles.

"Only you might have dropped me half a word by Joe. Who was the lady? Come, Charley: confession's good for the conscience."

"Tell me what you want me to confess, and perhaps I may do it. I'm all in the dark."

"Oh, of course," mockingly returned Peter Chester. "But a truce to jesting, old fellow," he added in a different tone. "Why need you keep it so quiet? Who was the lady?"

"What lady?"

"That you escorted last night to the Haymarket. Grand tier; first row."

"I was not at the Haymarket last night," returned Charles.

"Oh, but you *were*," answered Peter Chester, with an emphasis that unmistakably pronounced his own belief in it.

"Hear me a minute, Chester," quietly returned Charles. "I have this evening been pretty nearly persuaded out of my own identity, and I don't care to enter upon another discussion of a similar nature. I have told you that Tomkins was with me last night until eleven o'clock, and I told you truth. I did not stir out of my chambers, and by a quarter past eleven I was in bed."

When we assert a thing in good faith, it is somewhat annoying to find the assertion received doubtfully. Peter Chester stared at Charles. He knew him to be truthful; but he did not believe him now—and Charles saw he didn't.

"It was in this way," narrated Peter. "Satchel looked in this morning on his way to Court, just to ask how my throat got on. 'Hope you enjoyed waiting for Baumgarten last night, Chester,' said he—for he had offered to stop the evening with me, and I told him I didn't want him; I should have Baumgarten; 'hope you were jolly: *he* was.' 'Why?' said I, 'how do you know? Baumgarten never came.' 'No,' returned Satchel; 'he was at the Haymarket, rather close to a lady all the night: saw a good deal more of her face than he did of the stage.'—I say, though, Charley, you were a bold fellow: suppose Mary Dynevor had come up from Brighton and been there?"

"I wonder Satchel did not say it was Mary Dynevor—or you," retorted Charles Baumgarten.

"You would not like it if we did," returned Peter Chester. "This looked like quite another style of damsel." Satchel thinks you had been punishing the wine, for he never saw you so gay and sparkling before: quite an improvement on the usual staid quietness of Charles Baumgarten. He told you so."

"Told me so!" repeated Charles, in astonishment. "Does Satchel say he spoke to me? At the theatre?"

Peter Chester nodded. "He spoke to you in the throng coming

out; but he could not get very near you, he says; only gave you a few words over the people's heads."

"He gave them to somebody else; not to me."

At which remark Peter Chester laughed as heartily as his throat allowed him.

Charles stayed with him until ten o'clock, and then went home to his chambers, letting himself in with his latch key. Turning up the gas in the inner room, where he generally sat, he touched the bell upon the table. Joe came in to answer it. He was a smart lad of fifteen, who slept in the chambers.

"Anyone been here, Joe?"

"No, sir, not since I came back," replied the boy.

"When was that?"

"Only now, sir."

"Only now!" repeated Charles Baumgarten. "Why, where did you stay?"

"They kept me ever so long down there, sir, while they was answering of the note—I put it upon your table, sir. Mother was here, too, to answer anybody that might ring. She had some work to do."

"Well, look here, Joe. If you are going to take to be long on your errands—as you have been several times lately—I shall have to replace you with someone who can be quicker. You can go to bed now."

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT THE BISHOP SAW ON THE BLOTTING-PAD.

EARLY the following morning, while Charles was at his breakfast, and before the arrival of his clerk, he was surprised by a visit from the Bishop of Denham. The same bishop, only older, whose ear for music was deficient, as he once confided to Lady Grace. A good but rather strict and straitlaced man, who had never ceased to take an interest in Charles since Dean Baumgarten's death, with whom he had been very friendly. His carriage had brought him to Pump Court; at least, as near to it as was possible; he came up-stairs and apologised to Charles, who rose to receive him, for his early visit. He was on his way to Lambeth Palace, where he had an appointment.

The Bishop opened his business standing, saying he had not time to sit. It appeared that he was trustee for something or other, a very trivial affair, but it touched the rights of the Church, as he solemnly worded it, and an action at law was unavoidable; if his young friend felt sufficient confidence in himself to do them justice, he would see that he was appointed leading counsel; it might be a lift to him in his profession.

"Of course all this is *sub rosâ*," remarked the prelate. "You will receive particulars from the solicitors, together with the brief. I'll

write down one or two points, if you will give me pen-and-ink, to which your attention must be chiefly directed, and then if you think you can master them, I'll mention you to the solicitors."

"If your lordship will be at the trouble of sitting to my desk, you will find all you require at hand," said Charles, rising to pilot him to it.

Down sat the Bishop and wrote rapidly for five minutes. "Have you some blotting-paper?" he asked.

"The blotting-pad is under the paper you are writing upon," explained Charles, and the Bishop drew it out.

Bending his head, he stared at it through his spectacles. Then, turning his severe face to Charles, he spoke in a tone that ought to have annihilated him.

"Do you give this to me to use, sir?"

Charles advanced quickly, looked and stood confounded with vexation. On the blotting-pad, white and clean, for the top sheet must have been taken off, was a fancy drawing in pen-and-ink, bold, clear and well done, of half-a-dozen ballet girls in very airy costumes. The colour flew to Charles's face; he knew what the Bishop was. What on earth, would he judge, must be his private pastimes, if he could adorn his professional desk with such sketches, and set a Bishop down to regale his eyes with them?

Charles tore off the sheet in a heat. "I assure you, my lord, on my word of honour, that I know not how those—those things came there. Some one must have been here last night unknown to me, and taken the liberty to leave a remembrance behind him."

"Allow me to recommend you to burn it, sir," said the scandalised divine.

"Yes, but I will first of all endeavour to identify the offender," was Charles's answer.

Up rose the Bishop, his head erect, and his apron rustling.

Charles attended him down the stairs, but his lordship did not shake hands with him. Back tore Charley, two stairs at a time. Joe's mother, who lived near at hand, and came in to attend to the work at stated times, was then removing the breakfast-things.

"Were you here last night while Joe was out, Mrs. Tuff?"

"Yes, sir. I had some cleaning ——"

"Who came in?" interrupted Charles.

"Nobody came, sir: not a single soul."

"Who has been into this room this morning?" continued Charles.

"Only me, sir, to put it to rights."

"Did you do this, then?" asked Mr. Baumgarten, pushing the sheet of blotting-paper under her eyes.

"Me!" cried Mrs. Tuff, who was a sharp-faced little woman in a neat stuff gown and white cap. "You must be joking, sir. When I saw it there in dusting, I thought what odd looking ladies they was. And I put the writing-paper upon 'em, to cover 'em up a bit."

Charles reflected. "Joe wouldn't do it?" he remarked.

"Joe!" said Mrs. Tuff, in astonishment. "Why, sir, Joe would not dare do such a thing as that. He couldn't either. Joe haven't no talent that way. When he was a little one, I'd give him a pencil and piece of paper and tell him to draw the cat, but it would come out more like a pump."

"That just brings us round to my argument, that someone else has been in the room," said Charles. "Now I want to find out who that is."

"It must have been done in the day-time yesterday, sir."

"The last thing, before dinner, yesterday evening, after Mr. Clay left, I wrote a note at the table and used this blotting-pad," returned Mr. Baumgarten; "and left it as I used it, much marked with ink. "Did Mr. Clay come in last night for any purpose?"

"No, sir. And if he had, he'd not have left them disrespectful things behind him."

That was true enough. But Mr. Clay, joint clerk to Charles and another young barrister, might have let someone in who had so amused himself; some lawyer's clerk with a hasty brief, who possessed more skill than discretion. However, the woman persisted that no person whatever had entered; and Charles Baumgarten thought it a mystery, which seemed, for the moment, incapable of solution.

Sitting down to his desk, he began to look over some papers. A few minutes later, and Charles had occasion to open one of the deep drawers on either side the desk. He took his bunch of keys from his pocket, and fitted one into the lock. But it would not open. The lock had evidently been tampered with—and he had left it in perfect condition the previous evening. Mrs. Tuff was called in again.

"Will you believe now that some one has been at mischief in the room?" demanded her master. "They have been at the drawers: I cannot unlock them."

She stood, somewhat incredulous; and Mr. Baumgarten, taking another key, tried the opposite drawer. It opened readily, but he gazed at it as if transfixed. "Look here!" he sharply uttered.

The woman advanced and stood behind his chair. It was full of papers and parchments, all in a mass of inextricable confusion.

"Do you see this?" he cried, sharply.

"I see the drawer is in a fine mess," was her rejoinder.

"Now, listen, Mrs. Tuff. Yesterday evening, after I had written the note I spoke of, before I sealed it, I opened this drawer to put a parchment in: at that time it was in perfect order, and I locked it and left it so. There is some mystery in all this."

Mrs. Tuff could dispute facts no longer; she had to give in to the evidence of her eyes. "Sir," she said, "what a good thing it is that I was here last night instead of young Joe! We might have accused him of doing it for mischief."

"I don't know that it is a good thing," significantly retorted her master. "The fact must be that you dropped asleep last night and let someone get in."

The woman was indignant at the insinuation. "Sir," returned she, "I'd rather you accused me of doing it myself than say that. I don't think I as much as sat down last night, for I thought it a good opportunity to clean out the cupboards; and that's what I was doing the whole evening."

Dismissing her, Charles Baumgarten sat thinking it over. By a desperate wrench, he succeeded in opening the drawer, and its contents appeared to be untouched. Altogether, it was singular. Had anyone got in for the purpose of plunder, rummaged over the contents of one drawer, attempted the lock of the other, would he have been likely to leave his trail behind him in the shape of those ballet girls, whose appearance had nearly done for the Bishop? No. Charles concluded some one of his own acquaintances must have done it for a "lark," and he would very much like to find out which of them it was.

Only a few minutes had elapsed when Mrs. Tuff reappeared, asking permission to speak.

"It has all come over me this moment as clear as daylight, sir," she began, advancing a few steps into the room. "Some rogue must have got in last night through your leaving the key in the passage door."

"Through—what do you say?" asked her master.

"The latch-key, sir. You left it in the door when you went out the second time."

"I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Tuff. I did not leave my key in the door last night or any other night."

"Why, yes, sir, you did," was her answer, spoken in a tone of remonstrance. "Else how could I have got in?"

"What are you dreaming of now? You have your own key."

"But you took mine from me last night, sir. Don't you remember?" she added, seeing Mr. Baumgarten appeared not to comprehend. "When I came back, I found the latch-key in the door, and I knew you had left it there for me: but I thought it not a safe thing to do, sir, if you'll forgive me for saying it."

Charles Baumgarten looked at the woman in amazement, for not a syllable of what she was saying could he understand. He ordered her to explain.

"When you came back, sir, not long after you went out——"

"Stop a bit. We shall never come to the end in this way. I went out after dinner, and I came home at ten o'clock. I took my key with me, and let myself in with it on my return. What other tale are you telling?"

"I don't mean that at all, sir; I mean when you came back at dusk," obstinately persisted the woman.

"I did not come back at dusk."

Mrs. Tuff paused, wondering, no doubt, whether night and sleep

had affected her master's memory. "Sir," she said, "perhaps you might call things to mind if you tried. When you had gone away after dinner, I went out to do an errand or two, and had just shut the door, when you ran up the stairs, and took my key from me to let yourself in. I suppose you had forgotten to take out yours. I was away maybe half an hour, and when I came back what should I see but my latch-key outside the door—and I know my key from yours, sir, by the dent in it. I knew you had left it there for me to get in with: still I didn't think it was safe. London is such a place for thievery—and the Temple's no more secure than any other part."

"You have done a pretty thing," was the comment of Mr. Baumgarten. "It was not to me you gave the key."

The woman felt hurt. "I'm near-sighted, sir, I know that, and my eyes are sometimes at fault; but they are not so bad that I could mistake anybody else for my own master."

A silence ensued. Mrs. Tuff chiefly passed it in staring. Charles signed to her to retire.

He sat on, asking himself where and what the mystery could be. Personated at the jeweller's, his handwriting appearing upon a bill, accused of showing himself off at the Haymarket Theatre in questionable companionship, and now personated in his chambers to the deception of his own servant!

Had Cyras Baumgarten been in Europe, Charles might have supposed, remembering there used to be much likeness between them, and might be still, that he was the actor in all this; but, as Charles knew, Cyras was where he had been for some years past—in New Zealand.

An uncomfortable feeling clung to Charles all day: go where he would, he carried it about with him, even to the Courts and into the presence of the judges.

In the evening, he went to call at Eaton Place: he had not done so since Mary went to Brighton. Dr. Dynevor was still in town; and, much to Charles's surprise, he found that Mary was also: she had returned that day. Upon being admitted, he saw the maid, who had, as he knew, attended Mary, crossing the hall.

"You are back again, Sarah!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, we came up to-day," the girl answered, and proceeded to explain the reason. The family they were staying with at Brighton received news of the dangerous illness of a relative at Cheltenham, and had to speed thither at once.

Instead of being shown to the drawing-room as usual, Charles was marshalled to a small one off the dining-room, and Miss Dynevor came to him. By the fierce look of her flaxen wig, her raised eyebrows, and her haughty tone, Charles saw that something was amiss.

"Then it is Mr. Charles Baumgarten!" she exclaimed, as if his appearance solved a doubt. "When the butler announced your name,

I told him he must be mistaken. May I enquire the purport of your visit, sir?"

Charles laughed. Miss Dynevor was subject to changes of mood and manner, but he did not let them trouble him, any more than the boys and girls did. "I came to take tea with you for one thing, Miss Dynevor. And Mary has come home, I hear," was his answer.

"Yes; she has returned," stiffly responded Miss Dynevor. "But—you must be aware that it is not convenient to receive you this evening."

Charles looked at her: there was something in her voice, her manner, that he had never met before, and his pulses quickened with a sense of coming evil.

"Or at any future time," continued the lady, who had not taken a seat, or asked Charles to do so.

"But why?" exclaimed Charles. "What have I done?"

"You cannot really need to enquire, Charles Baumgarten, and it will be particularly unpleasant to me to inform you," said she.

"Nevertheless, I must press you to do so," said Charles. "A man cannot meet a charge blindfold, Miss Dynevor."

She drew herself up; the flaxen curls seemed to bristle. "I saw you in a situation, sir, the night before last at the play, which—which—which—in fact, perfectly shocked me. 'If, that dear defunct gentleman, the late Dean of Denham, had seen this,' I breathed to myself, 'he would have disowned his son—as we must do from this hour.' And I came straight home, I avow to you, sir, and acquainted my brother, and said sufficient to my nieces to satisfy them that you were a black sheep. Since Mary returned, I have explained to her; and—and—of course she will give you up."

Charles had listened to her with deference. "Now will you please tell me, Miss Dynevor, where you saw me, and what the 'situation' might be," he said when she had concluded.

"You are truly bold to ask it, Charles Baumgarten," she retorted. "But what else could I expect? No, sir; my communication is closed."

"I beg your pardon: your communication at present amounts to nothing. To continue it is due to me."

"Very due," she sarcastically answered. "And no less necessary than due, considering that you saw me as plainly as I saw you."

"Was it at the Haymarket theatre?"

Miss Dynevor gave vent to a modest little scream, which she smothered in her handkerchief.

"Whether it was at the Haymarket or whether it was at Westminster Abbey, it need not be alluded to," she retorted, "and I have never been subjected to speak of such things. You are a hypocrite, Charles Baumgarten; it is what most young men of the present day are. I've heard them compared to whited sepulchres and I think the comparison a very good one. Our interview is at an end, sir."

She swept away majestically, leaving Charles to make an ignominious exit from the house. But Charles was not in a hurry to do it. He wanted to explain : yet with whom ? The Sub-dean was so hot and peppery, especially in the first blush of an affair, that an explanation with him generally did more harm than good. Apart from that, what explanation had Charles to give ? None. None that would be believed.

As he stood thus thinking, the room door was slowly pushed open and Regina appeared.

"She's gone, isn't she, Charley ? Was she very dreadful ?"

"Very," returned Charley, shutting the door.

"When Aunt Ann has a grievance, no one can come up to her, and it's many a year since she had such a grievance as this one," went on Regina. "Oh, Charley, what fun it was !—how did you pluck up the courage ?—and who was it ?"

"Just tell me what you've heard," said he.

"That you were at the Haymarket Theatre, in its most conspicuous place, beaung a lady with painted cheeks. We got it all out of Janet, Aunt Ann's maid. You should have heard Aunt Ann in her room last night, old Janet says, and all the names she called you !"

"I suppose this has been told to Mary ?"

"Trust Aunt Ann for that. Who was the lady, Charley ?"

"I wonder, Regina, whether you'll believe me if I tell you something ?"

"Try me. Perhaps you are going to say it was Gertrude ?"

"Gertrude is at Great Whitton, you know. I don't know who it was, Regina, for I was not at the theatre at all."

"Not at the theatre !"

"No. I was in chambers all the night. "I've heard of this already. A friend of Peter Chester's thought he saw me there—just as you describe. It must have been some fellow who bears a resemblance to me. Can't you get Mary to come down to me ? Do, Regina. And you will please tell her *from me* that there's not a word of truth in the tale. I must see her for a minute or two."

"She will have to smuggle herself down the staircase, then ! Aunt Ann is sure to be on the watch," returned Regina. "I'll go and see."

Very shortly Mary came stealing in. She was looking pale, but in better health than before she went to Brighton. Charles stood before her in agitation.

"Mary, before I attempt to greet you, let me assure you that the story which they have got up about me is utterly false. *You* will not believe it ?"

"Oh, no, no," she wildly said, as she burst into tears and put her head upon his breast. He was about to clasp her in his arms when the door was flung back and Dr. Dynevor walked in.

"To your room, young lady," he cried out imperiously to the

terrified girl, who had drawn away from her lover, with a gasp. "Have you no sense of shame? To your room, I say."

Closing the door after her retreating figure, the Canon turned his wrath upon Charles. "How dare you appear at this house?"

Charles knew what that wrath meant, and strove to arm himself for the contest. "There's no reason, sir, why I should not appear," he was beginning, when the Sub-dean stopped him, all the floodgates of his temper let loose.

To Charles's confused astonishment, he found that all was known. The repudiated bill for jewellery; the lady with painted cheeks on his arm at the theatre; the disreputable ballet girls on his blotting-pad. The last item had been confidentially mentioned that afternoon by the Bishop of Denham.

Meeting Dr. Dynevor on his return to town, the Doctor, full of wrath, even then, had told the prelate about Charles and the Hay-market episode, upon which the Bishop, sadly put out for Charles's sake, reciprocated the information by telling of the pen-and-ink sketches.

"He is going to the—ahem!—to the bad all one way," growled the Sub-dean—and would have said the "deuce," but remembered to whom he was talking.

Charles stood speechless, literally not knowing what defence to make. "Will it be of any use my denying this, sir?" he asked in a pause of the storm.

"Denying it! To me? Does this impudence become you, Charles Baumgarten?"

"It would not become me, sir, if it were true. But—nay, pray hear me for a moment, Dr. Dynevor—it is not true. I declare to you, sir, as truthfully as I can ever speak in this world, that, so far as I am concerned, it is all false. It was not I who did this."

Dr. Dynevor glared at him through his spectacles.

"I did not buy any jewellery, and I did not accept the bill; I was not at the theatre or out of my chambers that night; and I cannot tell who it was that drew the figures on the blotting-pad. I did not know they were there until the Bishop spoke. Do you believe me, sir?"

"Believe you! I believe you to be a rascal, unworthy to remain inside my house. I will trouble you to go out of it."

The Sub-dean rang the bell. "The door for Mr. Charles Baumgarten," he said to the servant.

Charles splashed through the streets in the mud and the rain, for it had turned out a boisterous night, wondering whether he should ever be able to clear himself, and whether the police would be able to fathom the mystery if he called them to his aid.

(To be continued.)

GWEN

By E. M. ALFORD.

"MAMMA, I wish you would ask Mr. Dallas to coach me up in my arithmetic. I am sure I shall fail in it if you don't."

The girl who was speaking was standing on the rug in front of a cheery fire. She was tall and straight; holding her head high, with a certain youthful imperiousness which was rather attractive. Her hands were clasped loosely before her, and her head was turned towards her mother, who leaned back in a low chair on her right hand.

On the opposite side of the hearth sat a man of some thirty-two summers, with a kind and quietly humorous face; a face to pique the curiosity of an impetuous, enquiring young mind such as this girl's, from the repose of its usual aspect and the latent power of sarcasm in the curves of the well-shaped mouth. Mr. Dallas, for it was he, was mathematical master at the college of which Dr. Ellis, the girl's father, was the head.

"Gwen, you are the most audacious child I know," said Mrs. Ellis, in a pleasing contralto voice, that harmonised with her face and bearing. She was handsomer than her daughter, although there was a certain resemblance between them.

Gwen was not exactly pretty, but there was an undefined charm in the girl's whole appearance, in her attitudes, her movements, her unexpected ways and words. One liked to watch her, rather wondering what would come next: what would be the next youthful enthusiasm which would take possession of her. She seemed the impersonation of young life on the threshold of the unknown and mysterious future.

As her mother spoke in her rich, leisurely tones, Gwen turned her head with a little toss of impatience towards the other occupant of the room.

"You do not think me unreasonable or impertinent, do you, Mr. Dallas? *You* would like me to come out well in the Oxford Local Examination, I'm sure, for the credit of us all. And the boys say you are the best coach in the school."

"The boys are under my authority, Miss Gwen; but you must remember that I shall have no authority over *you*," said Mr. Dallas quietly, looking at her with an amused expression in his grey eyes.

"Then you *will* take me in hand!" exclaimed the girl eagerly. "I am *so* glad. When shall we begin? This afternoon? It is a holiday, and I am sure it does not look tempting for a walk."

"Very well, then. If Mrs. Ellis has no objection I will undertake the Herculean labour," said Mr. Dallas, rising. "Only remember,

Miss Gwen, it is to be real work, and I must have real authority over my pupil while she is under my instruction. Shall we begin at once?"

Mr. Dallas had been ten years a master at Dr. Ellis's school, having come there straight from the University. He had, therefore, known Gwen as a small child in short frocks; and although he sometimes put the prefix "Miss" to her name now, in deference to her sixteen summers, yet the pet abbreviation of "Gwen" slipped out usually without it.

They all called her "Gwen," for she was a great favourite with the whole large household, and Gwendoline would have been far too formal a name for one so bright, frank and unsophisticated: whilst her father, truth to tell, somewhat spoilt his only daughter, crediting her with talents and acquirements beyond her present possession. Gwen's facility in making the most of what she did know, her quick wit and ready sympathy with other people's hobbies, probably misled him as to the extent of her knowledge. For Gwen was very frank in confessing her own ignorance; only, somehow, nobody believed in any possible stupidity of hers; and when she announced that she was going in for the Oxford Local Examination of course everyone predicted her coming out with honours.

Gwen, too, was sanguine herself, until her bug-bear arithmetic began to dawn upon her as a well-nigh unconquerable fence in the way. A fence, however, which if anyone could help her to clear, it would be Mr. Dallas, she knew. He had such a pleasant way of putting things, and was, moreover, gifted with a keen sense of humour, which always seemed to Gwen, to have a special virtue in clearing away mental cobwebs.

So the two began their new rôle of tutor and pupil on this dull Saturday afternoon, in Gwen's study, a small room adjoining the drawing-room, where she pursued her daily studies with her governess.

II.

"WELL, Gwen, where are we to begin?" asked Mr. Dallas, taking one of the two chairs which Gwen had placed at the crimson-covered table. "I must learn the extent of your ignorance as a first step, you know."

"That will be difficult to find, I fear," said Gwen, seating herself rather ruefully beside him, with her books before her. "Of course I know the multiplication table; a parrot could learn that, I suppose; but I don't see any sense in it all. It doesn't interest me in the least."

"But it ought to interest you exceedingly," said Mr. Dallas, with an air of gravity. "Just think of the vast consequences dependent on the incontestable fact that two and two make four. But, you

engaged me as a coach," he added, laughing. "I can allow no word except on the subject in hand, until the hour is up."

So Gwen had perforce to concentrate her mind on the task before her, but her knitted brows showed how difficult she found it, and the little impatient sighs that escaped her were quite pitiful. She looked so white and worried after awhile, that almost unconsciously he took to working out the sums for her, and this grew into a habit with him as the lessons went on.

For they did go on very regularly all through the term. On each half-holiday until the Easter vacation, did Mr. Dallas devote one hour of his precious leisure to his interesting, but by no means promising pupil. And I don't think he begrudged the sacrifice. For if Gwen was dull at figures she was very bright in other ways. Quite surprisingly alive, intellectually, for her age, Mr. Dallas decided.

And so the weeks slipped by, and the beautiful spring afternoons came round, when all nature seemed to invite our students out of doors. And yet both appeared very content to look upon the dainty snow-drops and gay crocuses in the Head-Master's garden, through the diamond-paned windows of Gwen's "den," and to rejoice in the renewed beauty of earth and sky, over the Rule of Three and Practice.

III.

THE examination was over, and Gwen felt triumphant. To be sure, the arithmetic paper had bothered her at first, but she had dashed at it bravely, feeling that it was easier for her to take any fortress by storm than by a long and patient siege. So she had got through her paper quickly, and had indulged thereafter in a delicious day-dream, pitying the poor girls around her, who showed by their knitted brows how painfully they were plodding through their questions.

"I hope it is all right," she said to Mr. Dallas, when she met him later in the evening. "Oh, I couldn't give you any account of the paper now," she went on, in reply to a query of his as to its stiffness. "I just went at it headlong, as one would go at an unavoidable five-barred gate; and I think it is all right."

"You should have taken plenty of time over it," said Mr. Dallas, rather anxiously; "sums can't be guessed at, you know, like some other things."

"Oh, well, I think my paper was tolerable," said Gwen. "At any rate, if I had pored over it for all the rest of the time, I don't believe I should have done it one bit better; and I don't see the good of bothering oneself over such dry things as figures more than one can help."

"How often must I remind you of the aim of all education?" exclaimed Mr. Dallas, in a half-humorous tone of exasperation. "Don't you know that it is just the discipline which we all need,

and that if we only do what we like in life, our characters will be worthless?"

"I never meant to waste my life in doing only what I like," said Gwen, hotly. "I mean to try and make the best of it for others. But I thought you allowed that our tastes were given us for guides: and that it is better to make the most of what talents we have than to be trying to force ourselves into other people's places. Only you never *will* give me the least bit of encouragement. I can't think why the boys say you are such a good coach!" exclaimed Gwen, angry tears starting to her eyes, which she hurried away to hide.

Mr. Dallas's impulse was to follow her, and plead for forgiveness. He had not seen the starting tears, or at all risks he would have done so; but something kept him back, and with a suppressed sigh, and a very tender, pitiful look on his kind, clever face, he went his way.

As for Gwen, she hurried into her room, and sitting down before her crimson-covered table, leant her arms upon it and her head upon her arms, and let the tears flow. What had come over her?

IV.

THE school had re-assembled again after the summer vacation, and the whole place was alive once more with the cheerful stir of brisk boy-life. The long vacation had somehow seemed especially long to Gwen this year, and the regular ringings of the school bell for chapel and call-over, and the sight of the cricket-field alive with white-flannelled cricketers, was especially welcome to her. She was eager too for tidings of the result of her examination, which might come any day now, and her pulses beat more quickly at each knock of the postman. The meeting between herself and Mr. Dallas had been very friendly. He had described his Swiss tour, and they had had one of their old friendly chats, though not in Gwen's den, and without any arithmetical interludes.

This was on the first day of term, and on the next afternoon poor Gwen learnt her fate. Alas! her worst fears were realised. In one of the preliminary subjects, arithmetic, she had failed utterly, and in one only, composition, had she attained any extra marks.

On hearing the postman's knock, she had fled to her den, and shut herself in, in a fever of expectancy. Presently she heard her father's step without, and the next moment he opened the door and stood there radiant, with the letter in his hand.

"I thought we would read it together, Gwen," he said, cheerily; and then noticing her white cheeks, he added hastily: "What is it child? are you ill?"

"Oh, papa, suppose I have failed?" gasped Gwen.

"Failed? Nonsense, that is out of the question! Let us see rather, what honours you have won."

And then the fatal missive was opened, and the next moment Gwen had sunk down on a chair by the window-sill, and the small glossy head—generally held so high—was bowed in abject misery, and the slight girlish figure was shaken with sobs.

Angry and indignant as Dr. Ellis was with the examiners, for failing to appreciate his daughter's real merits, he was still more distressed at the desolation of her grief, and strove to comfort her.

"Never mind, Gwen, it is of no real importance," he said, tenderly caressing the girl's bowed head, with a touch that went straight to her heart.

Just then a bell rang, and Dr. Ellis had to hurry off, not sorry to escape. In the corridor he met Mr. Dallas.

"Poor Gwen is in terrible trouble, Dallas," he said, in a shaky voice; "those stupid examiners have not passed her, and I can't say anything to cheer her. Perhaps you might be more successful."

Mr. Dallas went at once to Gwen's room, and as no one responded to his knock, he opened the door and stood on the threshold, with a very tender and wistful expression in his eyes.

Gwen still sat by the window-sill, with her arms resting upon it, and her head bowed upon them, as her father had left her, in an attitude of utter despair.

"I must apologise for coming in unperceived, Miss Gwen," said Mr. Dallas, drawing near, and speaking in his most composed and cheeriest tones. "Dr. Ellis has told me the tidings, but surely there is no need to be so cast down! You are only sixteen, and there is plenty of time to try again. Some of our best life-workers have begun with failure."

But Gwen's head only bent lower, and Mr. Dallas was puzzled how to proceed. His heart was very full of sympathy with his pupil, as he watched the chequered sunlight fall through the diamond-paned window on her bowed head. He grew desperate at last, and said in a voice which was—in spite of himself—rather tremulous with feeling: "Really Gwen you must not take it so to heart; we—who care for you—cannot bear to see you grieve like this. It is your happiness we care for, not any fleeting honours you might have gained. Do you suppose any of us will think less highly of you for your defeat?"

Something in the eager pleading of his tones startled the weeping girl, and enabled her to check her sobs, and raise her tear-stained face in response to his kind words. Resolutely thrusting back her tears she rose, and standing erect by the table, but with her head still bent, she said, rather unsteadily, however:

"It is just the thought of you that troubles me, most of all. To think that I should have wasted so many of your precious holiday hours, and all for this!"

"Wasted!" exclaimed Mr. Dallas. "I am sorry you look upon them in that light. For my own part I consider them some of the

most profitably spent hours of my last term, to say nothing of their pleasantness."

A blush of pleasure spread over Gwen's disfigured face for a moment, and her eyes glistened through the unshed tears, as she said :

"Did you really like it? Was it not a sacrifice after all, to spend those sunny hours shut up with so dull a pupil as myself? Ah! but that is only because you are so good," she went on more dejectedly. "It was a sacrifice all the same, and the worst of it is that I made no sacrifice on my part to meet it. I know it now. I liked our talks, and I *would* talk in spite of all your warnings, and I never really studied hard at the subject at all. You were quite right; I *am* shallow, and conceited, and I *do* follow my own inclinations almost always I fear. Oh! what a hateful sort of character I must be!" sighed the girl, in a tone of most genuine self-contempt.

"I don't think you are really shallow, and I am quite sure you are very honest and true, and not more conceited than we have all conspired to make you," said Mr. Dallas, smiling. "Moreover, you have made an immense stride in your education already, according to your own showing, in the discovery of your short-comings. It takes many people years, some of us even a life-time, to learn this priceless lesson of humility, which you have got by heart so soon. I, for one, shall look up to you with increased respect Miss Gwen, henceforth."

There was no raillery in his tone now, but a quiet earnestness that came like balm to Gwen's wounded spirit. The girl was deeply touched. Her tutor had been somewhat of a hero to her all along, although he had angered her at times by his plain-speaking. But all the more precious was his present encouragement, knowing as she did that it was spoken in good faith. She felt cheered, and responded with almost her old wonted gaiety.

Mr. Dallas, on the contrary, had suddenly grown serious. The boys could not think what had come over their clear-headed master in school that afternoon. He contradicted himself more than once, and answered so beside the mark on one occasion, that a subdued titter went round the class, which, however, was speedily checked.

V.

A THUNDER-BOLT fell on the school next day when a rumour became current that Mr. Dallas intended leaving at the end of the term. A rumour which the frown on the Doctor's face, and the haggard aspect of Mr. Dallas's, seemed to confirm.

No wonder Mr. Dallas looked haggard, for little rest had he known that night. During a long country walk the evening before he had thought the matter out, and on his return to the school had gone straight to the Doctor's study and placed his resignation in his hands.

Dr. Ellis, who seemed stunned at first, pleaded with him in vain to remain.

"I shall lose my right hand, Dallas, if I lose you," he had said, and had offered to increase his salary if money were at the root of the matter. And when he found all his pleading useless, he begged him at least to take a night to think it over. But Mr. Dallas was firm.

"I daren't trust myself to a night's consideration of the matter, Dr. Ellis," he said. "You cannot guess what it costs me to leave you all, or how keenly I feel your kindness in wishing to keep me. But I see clearly this is my only right course, and so would you, too, if I could explain. I can't trust myself to speak more on the matter to-night." And with an eager grip of the Doctor's hand he was gone.

But there had been little rest for Mr. Dallas that night. He began to think that he should soon hate figures as much as Gwen herself, so persistently did the refrain "twice sixteen is thirty-two" haunt him during the restless hours of darkness, together with the further fact that an income which suffices for one only will not suffice for two. It seemed a curious comment on his praise of the great fact to Gwen that "two and two make four!"

The terrible tidings of Mr. Dallas's resignation reached Gwen on the afternoon of that day, and was received with indignant disbelief. She begged her mother to ask him in to afternoon tea, that they might hear the denial from his own lips.

"I fear it is too true, Gwen," said her mother. "Your father is terribly upset about it. But we will ask Mr. Dallas to come and have a chat certainly. Maybe we shall be able to shake his resolution."

Mrs. Ellis's drawing-room was a very pretty one, and looked very beguiling this afternoon with Gwen presiding over the dainty tea-table near the fire-place, which was turned into a deliciously cool-looking grotto, by the aid of graceful ferns, and rustic cork, and pieces of mirror representing pools of water, in which the fronds of Hart's-tongue and maiden-hair were reflected. Mrs. Ellis reclined in her usual low chair with some pretty lace work in her hands, and turned a face full of gracious welcome on Mr. Dallas as he entered.

"Gwen and I are all impatience, Mr. Dallas," she said, "to hear from your own lips that you have re-considered your decision of last night, and are going to set all our minds at rest again."

Mr. Dallas took her out-stretched hand silently, and turned to greet Gwen. But that young lady resolutely put her hands behind her, and, glancing down upon him with a sort of imperious indignation, exclaimed:

"I want to hear that you are not going to desert us before I shake hands with you, Mr. Dallas!"

The master smiled, in spite of his soreness of heart, at the girl's attitude, and said quietly:

"Then I am afraid, Miss Gwen, I must submit to your displeasure, for it is, alas, too true!"

"True? and you dare to stand there and tell me so as composedly as if it were just an every-day matter!" exclaimed Gwen with kindling cheeks. "As if my father were nothing to you, or the school, or the boys, or mamma, or me! Oh! I call it mean to throw us all over like this, just for some fad of your own! I should have thought you were too loyal to act so!"

And Gwen resumed her seat from which she had risen at his entrance, and busied herself over the cups of tea.

"What can I say to her, Mrs. Ellis?" said Mr. Dallas, appealing to his hostess for aid. "You must know, all of you, that it is a terrible trial to me to contemplate leaving. It will be the greatest wrench of my life I feel sure. But I also feel sure that it *must* be made."

"In that case, Gwen, I do not see that we have any right to upbraid Mr. Dallas any more," said Mrs. Ellis, struck by the careworn look on her visitor's face, and the unusual gravity of his tones. "He must know his own affairs better than we can, and we have no right to intrude upon them."

Mr. Dallas went across to the tea-table, and said in a voice, whose earnestness startled Gwen, as it had done on the afternoon before when he was trying to comfort her:

"Will you not believe me, Gwen, when I tell you that I *must* go, but that the very thought of it makes me so miserable, that I cannot trust myself to talk about it yet."

She looked up at him then, and held out her hand almost humbly as she answered:

"Of course I believe you. I know you always act from a sense of duty, but yet it is just possible that you may sometimes make a mistake like the rest of us, isn't it?"

"Very possible indeed. Only when one's inclinations pull very strongly in what one believes the wrong direction, one has to beware," he answered, taking a cup of tea to her mother.

When he returned for his own, Gwen spoke again, with evident effort this time, and a painful blush spread over her face as she asked:

"It hasn't anything to do with me and my disgrace, has it? I shouldn't think of asking you to coach me again; and I mean to work so hard, that I really hope I may pass next time."

Mr. Dallas was rather puzzled how to reply, as she glanced up at him with a deprecating look in her face; so assuming a rallying tone, he said:

"What a foolish child you are to talk about disgrace. I thought we had settled that point yesterday."

"I am not a child, and I want to know if it has anything to do with me," persisted Gwen. "Whether I have worried you into going away?"

"You certainly are worrying Mr. Dallas now, Gwen," interposed her mother. "We have all spoilt her, that is the fact, Mr. Dallas," she went on in apology. "I really think it might be a good thing to send her to a boarding-school for a year or two."

"If I go away to school will you remain here?" asked impetuous Gwen, turning full upon him with the unexpected query.

He was not prepared for so direct an attack, and was moreover puzzled as to what he might allow himself to do under such altered conditions. Gwen saw the hesitation, and seized the opportunity.

"I believe he would, mamma," she exclaimed. "If so, I will go at once; next week that is. Miss Metcalfe's school, which you are always extolling so, begins next week. Do let me go."

It was Mrs. Ellis's turn to be surprised now. She glanced from Gwen's flushed face to Mr. Dallas's perturbed one, and then making some excuse to send the girl out of the room, said:

"Of course Gwen has been talking nonsense. I believe the poor child thinks she has brought disgrace on the whole establishment by her failure."

Mr. Dallas looked irresolute for a moment, and then said rather hurriedly:

"After all, I think I must ask your help, Mrs. Ellis. You have always been a kind friend to me, and you will, I know, be as lenient as you can to my folly. The fact is, I was foolish to undertake the office of tutor to Gwen. She had been but as a delightful child to me before; now she has become much more, and preposterous as the idea is, I cannot trust myself to remain under the spell of her presence. Do not think for one moment that I wish to enlist your sympathies on my behalf, except in helping me to make good my retreat. I am not quite so visionary as to dream of ever gaining such a prize as Gwen for my wife. I see all the facts plainly. I am just twice her age. I have only enough income for my own wants, and no prospects in the future even that would warrant me in hoping ever to be a fit husband for her. I would not tie her down to the insignificant lot of a poor school-master's wife if I could—she, who should have such a glorious career. But I would keep myself in working order if possible, and not fail, as I did yesterday afternoon, in just the ordinary school routine."

Mrs. Ellis had been listening eagerly, her work fell idly on her lap, and her eyes were fixed on the grave and troubled face of the speaker. But she had no time for any but the shortest reply, as Gwen was turning the handle of the door.

"Thank you for your confidence," the girl heard her mother say as she entered. "And now won't you let Gwen refill your cup?"

But Mr. Dallas declined, and took his leave instead, saying he meant to indulge in a country walk to try and get rid of the cobwebs.

"But what about my going to school, mamma?" queried Gwen as the door closed behind him.

"I am not sure but that it would be a good plan, my child. You are really grown up now, and two years of school-life might not be amiss. I must talk to your father about it."

"Then Mr. Dallas's going has something to do with me! Oh, mother, how can I have sent him away?" exclaimed the girl, in such evident distress that her mother felt sorely tempted to sooth her hurt feelings with some glimmer of the truth; but all she allowed herself to say was:

"Mr. Dallas has only too high an opinion of you, child. I hope you won't forfeit it by interfering unduly in his affairs."

And this combined encouragement and rebuke effectively silenced Gwen.

VI.

It was no slight sacrifice which Gwen made in volunteering to go to a boarding-school, and although she had never felt less like a heroine than as she settled herself into a corner of the railway carriage, yet, perhaps, she had never been nearer acting a heroic part. For the idea had been taken up by Dr. Ellis as a good one, and in a few days the whole matter had been arranged.

As she gazed listlessly at the peaceful meadows from her carriage corner, looking so smiling in the afternoon sunshine, a great longing came over her to be back in her beloved den, with the cheery sounds of school-life around her, and the familiar tones of her tutor's voice recalling her wandering thoughts to those "odious figures." But then a revulsion came suddenly over her, she brushed away the tears, and threw her head with a gesture of defiance, as she said to herself:

"I will work hard and conquer them yet. He shall respect me at least, and not find all his patient labour thrown away."

And Gwen kept her resolve, and worked so well during the three years of school-life that followed, that she was able to go in for and pass the Oxford Local Examinations, with credit to herself and to her school, which became in time quite proud of her, as one of its most hopeful pupils. Great was the pleasure which her father's delight in her successes gave her, but the secret ambition of her heart remained unsatisfied. Something withheld her from mentioning Mr. Dallas's name in her letters home, and after her father's intimation in his first note to her that Mr. Dallas had kindly consented to stay on, his name had been conspicuous only by its absence. Nor had she any chance of personally testing his interest in her successes, as Miss Metcalfe always arranged for her return home just a day after the college break-up, and eagerly as she looked for her tutor's familiar figure as her cab drove up to her father's door, it was always in vain.

"I believe he must do it on purpose, and I call it rather unkind, when I have really been trying so hard to do him credit at last," she would say to herself with a sigh.

But whatever Gwen might feel on the subject, she kept it most scrupulously to herself, and neither her father nor mother guessed at her disappointment. Neither did they trouble themselves much more about Mr. Dallas's sudden resolve and as sudden alteration. Mrs. Ellis had, indeed, told her husband of his hurried confidence, and they had agreed that it would be better not to mention him much in their letters to Gwen, and to ask Miss Metcalfe to time Gwen's return after the college break-up day. But there the matter had dropped, and had become so entirely a thing of the past that neither of them foresaw any difficulty in Gwen's final return home now, as a finished young lady, at the sedate age of nineteen. And even had they still retained any misgivings, there would seem no need to trouble about it any more, as Mr. Dallas had applied for the Head-Mastership of the Grammar School at G——, and Dr. Ellis little doubted that he would get it, so good were his testimonials and so high his degree. And although he still dreaded losing him, yet Gwen's approaching return reconciled him somewhat to the prospect of his loss.

It was a lovely June afternoon as the train, which was carrying many happy hearts homewards, stopped at a busy station and deposited amongst other passengers, a tall, stately girl, noticeable even amid the throng, for the bright youthfulness of her whole appearance, the poise of her head, and the beaming look of anticipation on her face.

"No one has come to meet me. Ah! then I shall arrive before my letter. What fun! How surprised they will be to see me a week before the time! Let me see, it is a half-holiday. The boys will be playing cricket: how I should love to go down amongst them! I don't feel a bit like a grown-up young lady. How fortunate for me that Miss Metcalfe should have felt it necessary to close her school earlier for fear of the epidemic that was spreading all around us. Now I shall be in time to see the boys and all of them," said Gwen to herself, a blush spreading over her face as she thus vaguely concluded her self-communings.

Yes, the boys were at cricket in the big field; and Gwen leant forward eagerly in her open cab as it drove around the gravel sweep, searching for a familiar form. And even as she did so her eyes encountered a pair of grey eyes fixed in surprised admiration upon her. Mr. Dallas was inside the field, leaning upon the railings, and talking with another master who was standing on the gravel without. Suddenly the sound of wheels attracted his attention, and looking up carelessly, he was transfixed by the apparition of Gwen in all her fresh fascination. The blush was still upon her cheek, the light of eager expectancy in her eyes. To Mr. Dallas's bewildered brain she looked like some beautiful impersonation of youth, something altogether above and beyond this work-a-day world, in her pure loveliness. Not that Gwen was strictly speaking lovely, but in his eyes she

was something much more than that, the very type of gracious womanhood. And, truly, in her simple but dainty summer attire, and with that rose-tint on her face, and her eyes shining with intense happiness, she was a sight to gladden a weary man's heart.

"Stop, driver!" she cried eagerly. And springing out of the carriage went straight across to the railings, and holding out her neatly-gloved hand to her tutor, exclaimed:

"I'm so glad I am in time to see you all. How delightful the dear old place looks. Oh, I think it almost repays one for the banishment to come back and find it all the same."

And then she turned and shook hands with the other master, thus giving Mr. Dallas time to recover his self-possession, which, for the moment, he had lost utterly. However, with a desperate effort, he summoned his wits about him and said, as he lightly vaulted the railings and stood beside her:

"It is very good of you to come back to us with such kind words, but I feel quite ashamed to be caught in this bad form. Had we known, we would have given you a better reception."

"And what better reception could I have than to find you all like this?" said Gwen, with a wonderfully thrilling tone in her voice. "Don't I love this dear old cricket-field next best to my own den? And have I not been almost wishing that I were a boy as I came along, that I might go down and take my turn at the bat? But I mustn't stay gossiping here, when I've not even set eyes on my father and mother yet."

"They are not at home. What could have induced you to come back like this without even sending a line?"

"I did send a line, Mr. Mentor, so you need not begin to scold me as of old. And there it comes, just in time to save my character," she exclaimed, as the afternoon postman turned the angle of the house.

Gwen and Mr. Dallas were slowly sauntering up to the door, where the cab with Gwen's boxes awaited her orders; the other master—a comparatively slight acquaintance of hers—had lifted his hat and departed. What a stir and bustle there was among the servants when Miss Gwen's sudden arrival became known, and what lamentations about master and mistress having gone out to afternoon tea at a distant country rectory! But Gwen took it all very calmly; she ordered tea in the drawing-room, and insisted on Mr. Dallas taking it with her.

"I am not fit to sit down with you, Miss Gwen," said the tutor, surveying himself ruefully in the long mirror beside the elegant young lady who was laying her commands upon him.

"What nonsense!" exclaimed the girl. "As if it mattered a scrap what coat you have on, when you are just Mr. Dallas all the same. However, I will allow you five minutes to wash your hands, if it will make you feel more satisfied. Only five minutes, mind," she

insisted, looking back at him from over her shoulder as she went off to her own room. "I am famished for want of my tea, and I won't begin till you come."

A very cheerful tea-drinking was that in Mrs. Ellis's pretty drawing-room on this bright afternoon. Gwen's spirits were contagious, and Mr. Dallas threw off for the time all dreary forecastings of the future, which looked so overpoweringly dark to him, in the glow of the present sunshine. For the time, however, he would bask in the sunshine and be thankful for it, he resolved, as he sat in a low chair by Gwen's tea-table, and listened to her eager flow of talk and was waited upon by her dainty fingers.

They were still chatting over their tea on the old easy footing of tutor and pupil, discussing Gwen's conquest of her difficulties, the books she had been reading, and the new ideas that were just now uppermost in her busy brain, when Dr. and Mrs. Ellis returned.

After the first startled queries as to her sudden appearance had been satisfactorily answered, and the first warm greetings exchanged, Dr. Ellis turned to Mr. Dallas and, holding out a letter, said :

"This came for you by the afternoon post, Dallas, together with Gwen's announcement of her coming home. I hardly know whether to wish you tidings of success in it or not."

Mr. Dallas took the letter silently, and Gwen watched his face curiously as he read.

VII.

"WELL, what news?" asked Dr. Ellis, cheerily, as Mr. Dallas bent his knitted brows over his letter. "You don't look greatly charmed."

"And yet I have gained the appointment," replied Mr. Dallas, handing Dr. Ellis the letter with a very rueful face.

"What appointment?" asked Gwen, looking startled.

"The Head-Mastership of the Grammar School at G——," replied her father. "And I must say he is an ungrateful fellow to be so little pleased at the handsome way in which the important post is offered to him. May Gwen see the letter, Dallas? She will be pleased at her tutor's success."

"Certainly, if she cares to read it," replied Mr. Dallas, in a tone of assumed indifference.

Gwen read, with glowing cheeks and kindling eyes, the warm terms of appreciation in which the appointment was offered to her tutor; but she handed him back the letter with an indifference as studied as his own, saying some formal words of congratulation as she did so. All the girlish gaiety of a few minutes before seemed suddenly exchanged for the dignified reserve of a grown-up young lady; nor did she unbend again whilst Mr. Dallas was in the room. He could not understand her quick transition of manner towards himself, and pondered over it more deeply than he had ever pondered any abstruse problem of mathematics. And Gwen maintained this reserve during

the succeeding days, till he could almost fancy that her bright home-coming and that too-delightful tête-à-tête tea-drinking had been but a wonderful dream.

Her mother even noticed her reserve towards her former friend, and expostulated with her.

"I don't think you are quite kind to Mr. Dallas, Gwen," she said on the day before the school broke up. "We could not expect a man of his abilities always to remain with us as an under master, and he is evidently depressed about leaving us. I believe it was partly out of consideration for your father that he has remained on so long, and I for one, feel grateful to him."

"Oh! yes, of course, we all know he is a paragon of unselfishness," exclaimed Gwen, petulantly. "But do you know, mother, I am afraid I am beginning to hate paragons. Don't look so shocked, dear; I don't quite hate Mr. Dallas; but I don't feel like talking amiably about him just now."

Then, without awaiting a reply, Gwen hurried off, and snatching her garden-hat from a peg in the hall, fled to her favourite resort, a certain shrubby walk skirting the cricket-field. Swiftly she hurried on till a rustic seat was gained, screened by a rough trellis work, over which the boys had trained a luxuriant sweet-briar bush.

Here Gwen sat down in a very forlorn state of mind. Life looked very blank to her just now, in spite of the blue sky, the sweet scents, the dainty beauty of the briar blossoms, and the shouts and laughter of the boys in the field close at hand. Everybody seemed happy but herself.

"The place will be deserted in a few hours, and what do they care?" said Gwen to herself, leaning back in her corner, and trying indignantly to keep back the tears that would rise in her eyes.

Perhaps the said tears prevented her seeing some one approach, for as she almost angrily wiped them away, she was startled to find Mr. Dallas himself standing in the pathway in front of her retreat.

"Gwen," he exclaimed, anxiously, "what is the matter? Has anything vexed you? No clouds should cross such a sunny sky as yours. We older ones are more used to them, and can bear our burdens better."

"My sky is anything but sunny," replied Gwen, lifting her eyes reproachfully to his. "How can it be, when everyone is so heartless and indifferent; going away and leaving us deserted, without any regret? Just listen to the boys' voices, how full of triumph they are at the thought of to-morrow. I call it a horrid, ungrateful world."

And Gwen threw a glance of defiance at her tutor as she spoke.

"You can't expect boys to be miserable at the thought of going home. Were you miserable when you came back a week ago?" asked Mr. Dallas, seating himself by Gwen's side.

"No," replied the girl, turning away her face and plucking a piece of sweet-briar by her side; "everything seemed bright and delightful

then, but now all is changed. And I call it unkind of you to go away and make the whole thing different. I daresay we shall have a prig of a second master, whom the boys will hate and whom we shall none of us care a scrap for," burst out Gwen, all the dignity of the past few days suddenly giving way, and the pent-up bitterness and disappointment finding vent at last.

"Gwen, shall I tell you why I decided to go?" asked Mr. Dallas, gravely. "Will you promise not to be very angry with me if I tell you the truth?"

"I don't think I shall be much more angry than I am now," said Gwen. "Of course I know you deserve a better position as mamma says, and that it is only out of kindness you have stayed so long. Still I do call it unkind to go just as I have come home, and after I have worked so hard too to do you credit. It isn't as if I had failed again," protested Gwen, with flushed cheeks.

"Did you really think of me, Gwen, whilst you were away? And is it possible that the thought of a prosy middle-aged schoolmaster could have acted as a spur to you in your bright beautiful youth? Don't beguile me with any false hopes, Gwen. I have fought so hard all these years to conquer my presumptuous love, in vain. The first sight of you last week, overturned all my hardly-earned stoicism and common sense. I could not go on seeing you, Gwen, from day to day, and yet keep my sober sense. The truth would force itself out as it does now, against my better judgment. Now you know why I decided to go three summers ago, and why it is still more my duty to go now. Don't be very angry, Gwen. I do not ask for your love; I only tell the truth, and ask your pardon for daring to tell it."

Mr. Dallas had spoken eagerly, carried beyond his usual self-restraint, and he leant forward now, trying anxiously to read the face beside him. But Gwen's wonted self-possession had quite forsaken her. She still kept her face averted, but surely the fingers which held the sweet-briar spray were trembling, and could those be tears stealing from beneath the down-cast lashes?

"Gwen, why do you not speak. Have I vexed you by my foolish words?" asked the tutor, perplexed by the girl's silence and evident emotion.

"I don't think they were foolish at all," said Gwen, in a very unsteady voice. "And—and—you said you did not ask me for my love; so what can I say?"

"I dared not. It would be too presumptuous. Ah! Gwen, you have had your revenge upon me a hundred-fold for my boasted pride in your 'odious' figures. 'Twice sixteen is thirty-two' has weighed more heavily on my heart than any sum ever worried your pretty head! It would not be fair to ask you to sacrifice your beautiful youth to a man nearly double your age, with only the dull career of a schoolmaster's life before him."

"Now you are talking nonsense," said Gwen, suddenly rising and

confronting him with brilliant cheeks and shining eyes. "As it could matter whether you were thirty-five or eighty-five or one hundred and five, as long as you were Mr. Dallas and I was just Gwen! I always thought figures stupid things, but I never guessed that they could be stupid enough to part real friends!"

What happened upon this outburst of Gwen's we will leave our readers to imagine. Suffice it to say that an hour after Dr. Ellis met his daughter and his favourite master coming towards him across the lawn in a state of idyllic bliss, Gwen's face radiant, and Mr. Dallas's wearing an expression of almost boyish delight.

"He is not going after all, papa; I have bribed him to stay with this sprig of sweetbriar," said Gwen, slipping away and leaving her hero to tell the wonderful tale of their love.

After listening calmly to all Mr. Dallas had to say, the Head-Master heaved a sigh as he remarked: "It is the old story, Dallas, of the rising and setting sun. I was Gwen's hero once, but I must be content to play second fiddle for the future."

"She will not think of leaving you, sir; we have talked it all over," said Mr. Dallas, not noticing how the father winced at that "we." "I shall decline this new appointment, and ask you to let me remain on as I am for the present. And perhaps, eventually, you might let me furnish the unused wing of the College, so that when Gwen does leave you it will be only for another home under the same roof."

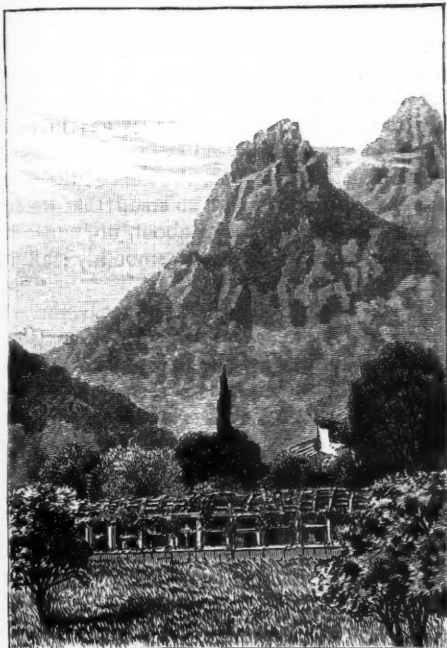
"Well, that is not a bad idea," said Dr. Ellis, "but I must have time to think it over. You young people are so impetuous; it nearly takes one's breath away."

With which gentle sarcasm, the Doctor went off to talk the matter over with his wife.



LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.



ON THE ROAD TO SOLLER.

Soller, Nov., 1886.

MY DEAR E.—The days pass tranquilly in this Island of Mallorca, and give to our lives an even tenour that is infinitely refreshing. We have just sufficient variety and excitement to prevent monotony from taking possession of our camp. As for dullness—no man ought to be dull who has any internal resource to fall back upon. Much less would it be excusable where there are two to drive away those fumes and phantasms which occasionally gather about one's brains when travelling alone in distant lands.

We cannot always command our moods.

Solitude, so often a necessity, at times becomes an insupportable burden. The reality of life, with the weight and woe of its errand, suddenly becomes overwhelming. The why and the wherefore: things that are wrong and might have been right: what is, as compared with what might have been: the sense of the inevitable: the mystery of those tangled skeins which make up our existence, and which no earthly power can ever separate and straighten: we all have these experiences, and in certain moments they come over us with a rush that paralyses our whole mental structure, and lands us in despair. In these moments, if left to ourselves, we should quietly disappear from the world and so find a solution to all our problems, though, it may be, not rest unto our souls. But our good genius

steps in, and the mood passes, and we return to our life clothed and in our right mind, and ready once more for battle.

But all this does not apply to our life in Mallorca. Here we have many resources, and no time to think upon metaphysics or the philosophy of life. We take photographs, and come out, as you have seen, without our heads: a mystery neither metaphysical nor philosophical, but scientific or psychical. H. C. sketches occasionally with great ardour, and I send you the result. More often he writes poetry, and then I spare you. We compare things and people, and fall into wise moods, which are so short-lived that we console ourselves with the old aphorism that great minds must sometimes unbend. We need a great deal of unbending, for it is our normal condition. We have only one subject for regret: it lies in that Eastern saying: "This also must pass away." *Les jours se suivent, les heures sonnent.* One day finds us in Palma, the next at the very ends of this beautiful little island. But it is all so small that we do everything leisurely. There is no undue rushing about, no unnecessary wear and tear of nervous tissue. All goes smoothly: all is merry as a marriage bell.

A bad comparison, by the way, for the bells here cannot be merry; they are cracked and tinny, and sound takes the place of melody. They begin the first thing in the morning. You are awakened from dreams of paradise to the furious din of a pandemonium. It is only possible to suppose that the bells in Palma have suddenly all gone mad—a raging madness in which there is no silence of melancholy whatever. The air is full of startling sounds—horrible, exasperating, yet so absurd that you laugh. The servants who are *dévotés* flock to church and cathedral and go through their matins. They tell their beads, and probably the while are thinking of the domestic duties of the day, and the bargains they are about to make in the market-place. I fancy that wandering thoughts are not regarded in the light of a grave fault; or if they are, the priest will absolve them. What can they tell in their hours of confession? For my own part, I should not know where to begin or end, what to say or what to leave unsaid. It is difficult enough to post up one's diary at the end of the day—those who keep diaries: I have never found it possible; any more than I have ever found it possible to make a single note of any place I ever visited—but to carry one's memory through a month's small sins seems to me a labour that should in itself at once atone for them all.

After telling their beads, the women flock to the market, and the early hour of seven is about the busiest of the day. Here loud voices take the place of the now silent bells. One hardly knows which of the two is the more unpleasant—the noise of the bells or the voices of the women. I have never heard such voices—out of Germany—as these Mallorquins and Mallorquinas possess. They are loud, harsh and grating. Men and women shout at you and at

each other just as if the sense of hearing had no existence, or at best a very distant one. They would almost raise the dead. Often I have to fly, or I know that something terrible would happen. Nothing in this island is soft and musical, except, perhaps, the voices of the frogs; and they, in comparison with their English species, have that excellent thing even in frog-land, a voice sweet and low.



SOLLER.

In my letter to-day, I have to introduce you to a new part of the island, where frogs abound, so that the topic is somewhat apropos. It is well when one subject leads up to another, so that by a series of mental evolutions, as it were, the links in the chain of one's narrative fit into each other "with a smooth result."

Soller, this new part of the island, is one of the most fertile and most beautiful. There is no railway to Soller, and once more we had recourse to the dignified and lordly barouche.

I should like you to see us starting on one of these expeditions. Our seat is so perched up that in getting in and out of the carriage it is quite unnecessary to open the door. We step gracefully over it, and thereby save time and trouble. H. C., it is true, now and then forgets his long legs, catches his foot in the woodwork, and the next moment lies sprawling in the dust. But we like these little diversions: at least, I find them amusing—when they happen to H. C. He bears them with the calmness of a great mind, and rising from these falls with a blank and serene expression, gives vent to his emotions in the sublimity of blank verse.

We started for Soller one fine morning. The barouche came round, decked out with clean brown holland covers in our special honour. Of course a small crowd collected, also in our honour. From every window in the fonda a head looked out; from some windows two or three heads. We had been carefully packed up by Francisco. Paolo, our coachman, sat on his box, immovable as a marble image, impenetrable as a sphinx. His features might have been carved in wood. To-day he had nothing to do but to drive us. Fish, flesh, fowl and fruit, forty-eight eggs, or a hundred and forty-eight if necessary—everything would be found in abundance at the Soller fonda.

A. and B. came down to see us off, and wish us bon voyage. I have already referred to them. You will perhaps remember that they crossed over with us from Barcelona. I have also mentioned that it was A.'s second visit to Mallorca, though I have never been indiscreet enough to ask him what mesmeric influence brought him once more to these sunny shores. They intended to follow us to Soller in a couple of days.

"I think," said A., looking at me with a very straightforward and innocent gaze, "we had better arrange not all four to stay at the same fonda. Their resources are limited, don't you know. There are two fondas in Soller. There is the Fonda del Pastor, and there is the other fonda. I always stay at the Fonda del Pastor. The other is the better. I advise you to stay at the other. It gives me much pleasure to think that you will be more comfortable than ourselves."

This was very charming. Here was the true spirit of philanthropy and self-sacrifice—found in the world about as often as the blossom of the flowering aloe, which comes out once in a hundred years, and dies in a night.

"You have a beautiful spirit," I replied, "and deserve canonising. I feel greatly refreshed and upheld by this exhibition of disinterestedness. Can you tell me who waits upon us at the other fonda?"

"Oh yes," replied A., looking at me more frankly than ever. "A very charming old woman. Quite a beautiful picture of an old woman. She cannot be more than eighty, but she is very brisk, and you will have the benefit of her long experience. Capital cook, too."

"Delightful!" I returned. "Nothing could be better. And who waits upon you at the Fonda del Pastor?"

"Oh, two very inexperienced sort of girls," replied A., withdrawing his beautifully frank gaze, and studying his boots. "Young sort of things, very foolish and unsophisticated, the daughters of the landlord; not at all up to the mark of the old woman at the other fonda."

"Are they pretty?" asked H. C., very irrelevantly, as I thought. What could it matter to him whether they were pretty or plain? Why will people ask unnecessary and stupid questions? But some people are always asking questions, and a very great part of English conversation consists of questions and answers.

"That is a matter of taste," replied A. "They are soft and cooing—to their father and mother, I mean," he added hastily, with a strong flush. "I prefer the severe and the majestic. I have never yet met with my ideal. I never expect to do so."

"A sort of female Colossus of Rhodes," said H. C. "That is a very fine sentiment. I agree with you. How beautiful it would be to rise to the grandeur of such a subject in the sublimity of an epic poem, for example."

"You will find the old woman at the other fonda much more inspiring," replied A., somewhat anxiously. "Allow me to direct your coachman, so that there may be no mistake."

After all this care you will be surprised to hear that in the end—I don't know how the confusion came about—a mistake did occur, and we actually descended at the Fonda del Pastor. It was all the fault of that stupid coachman, I am persuaded, whose brains are composed of nothing but cotton wool.

Away we dashed, with that aristocratic rumble which is as unmistakable in its way as the call of the night watchman, or the cry of the screech owl that so often startles the silence of these Palma nights.

Away we dashed, I say, under the now leafless plane trees of the Rambla, and out by the railway station. All this was familiar ground, and for some time we followed the road which led to Miramar. Then we branched off to the right. Far ahead of us stretched the hills, and we were about to go over the highest pass in the island. In climbing the heights of Valldemosa, you will remember that we had encountered that tremendous storm; to-day we were favoured with cloudless skies.

Whatever Paolo's faults, he is a capital driver, and does not spare his cattle. The long, straight road at length came to an end, and we began to ascend the windings of the pass. Soon we were looking behind us into a fair and fertile valley and luxuriant plains. At the commencement of the zigzags we found a charming house with a long avenue of cypress trees enclosed in fine gates of wrought iron. Within great walls were groves of orange and lemon trees, mingling

their rich foliage with that of the pale, sadder green of the olive. It was a small fertile paradise.

We ascended into the mountains. The hills stood out magnificently, in many chains, more cultivated and luxuriant than the heights of Miramar. Behind us, far away, stretched the great plains of Palma, the cathedral rising conspicuously above the town. Beyond all this, the blue waters of the Mediterranean, sleeping and placid,



THE PLAINS OF SOLLER.

mingled with the sky, and all melted into one far-off vision of repose and beauty.

It was a fine piece of engineering skill, this zigzag road. We left our lordly barouche to make its winding way upwards, and pursued a more direct course over roadside banks and walls. It was impossible not to be excited by all this grandeur of country, and fortunately we both see with the same eyes and enthusiasm, and both worship beauty in its highest forms. For what could be more dispiriting than to have all your animation and appreciation met by a tame and shadowy response? How it puts you off and throws you back upon yourself; and how infinitely preferable would solitude be to this. Happily H. C.'s emotions quite equal my own, and the

one is never very much behind the other. But he goes yet further ; for whilst I discreetly confine my adoration to hills and valleys and the beauties of still life, he, as you have not failed to gather, wastes much time in a vain worship and contemplation of fair Mallorquinas ; especially in their attitudes of devotion, when he becomes, as it were, a silent postulant at the shrine of their hearts and affections. Here, it seems to me, we have a poetical phrase quite worthy of the subject. It is somewhat far-fetched, perhaps, but, I hope, not involved. Let it stand.

We reached the extreme height, and on one side looked down into the Valley of Soller, on the other into the distant plain of Palma with its boundaries of sea and sky. We had now to descend the zigzag on the Soller side. Before us, far off, low down, small and indistinct, nestling in the plain, under the shadow of a great and high hill, reposed the town. Yet one could scarcely call it a plain. Soller is so surrounded and shut in by hills that it may be said to sleep in the hollow of a basin. This makes it extremely enervating and depressing, and many of its inhabitants look pale and sickly. Not a few die of consumption.

At the top of the zigzag on our downward route we passed a lovely old cross : one of the many crosses one finds here and there all over the island. This is one of the best, and dates back some centuries, but it has met with reverses and is by no means perfect. As we descended we looked into quite a narrow gorge, full of luxuriant beauty. We are now in the orange district of Mallorca par excellence. The slopes were crowded with these lovely trees, all bearing their graceful fruit. It was not yet ripe, yet sufficiently so to be tempting. So thought H. C. who reaching over the wall after stolen goods, all but overbalanced and came to a bad end.

I must, however, tell you, that to pluck fruit as you go along by the road side, is not only permitted, but desired. So I have been informed, and as I occasionally give way to the temptation, I wish to believe it. The fruit, indeed, is exquisite. The scent of the orange perfumes the air ; a perfume more delicious than anything we know of in England. Some of the oranges are lying upon the ground, and these we not only look upon as windfalls and legitimate booty, but they are also the best. The ripe apples, you know, fall in the orchard ; and what is true of apples is equally so of oranges.

We went downwards, until at length we found ourselves shut in by the hills of Soller. Nothing can be more beautiful and striking than the situation of the little town. If, indeed, it has a fault, it is that it is too closed in and confined by these towering heights. They give you a sense of suffocation : a sort of strait-waist-coat sensation—as far as one can realize what one has never experienced : for although, no doubt, like the rest of the world, I have often needed the restraining influence, it has never been applied.

Everyone, they say, is mad upon some point; I fear that most of us are mad upon a great many.

The little town itself is wonderfully picturesque: certainly more so than any other town in Mallorca. It is the beauty of age and decay. It looks as old as the hills themselves: nay, older; for these ever renew their youth, and are as juvenile and fresh to-day as when the first upheaval of nature gave them birth. But the town of Soller is grey, ancient and delapidated in appearance, if not in fact.

A stream runs through the town crossed by quaint bridges. On either side you have the wonderful old houses full of life and animation: the short and simple annals of daily existence. The stream has run shallow, waiting for the rains which will not come until the turn of the year. The stony bed is partly exposed and looks athirst. Some months ago the swollen stream brought down and washed away a great deal of the walls on either side, and as they have not been restored one looks upon a picture of devastation and ruin—a ruin, however, for which no one is much the worse.

Into all this lovely scene we rolled and rumbled in our lordly barouche, scattering wonder and astonishment in our path. It was not a royal progress this time, and H. C. did not bow right and left. In fact, he was evidently anxious and preoccupied, and I saw a look pass between him and the coachman which I could not quite fathom; but being the most unsuspicious of mortals I thought nothing of it. We can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us. We judge others by ourselves. It is useless to talk about the wisdom of the serpent if we possess only the harmlessness of the dove. Therefore I never suspected H. C. of anything in the way of plotting and planning. So much innocence of intention and guilelessness of character are beautiful traits in this advanced age.

We rumbled and rolled through the narrow streets, and the people flocked and stared. The lordly barouche seldom pays them a visit. Those who journey to Soller usually make use of the diligence. It is a most uncomfortable vehicle, without springs, heavily laden; shakes you to pieces, cramps your legs, and breaks your back. Soller ladies get in with their umbrellas, which they begin by planting firmly upon your toes; Soller men crush you up into nothing, and suffocate you with an odour of stale tobacco and garlic. I have gone through it all in other places.

The people of Soller stared; the little children shouted and hurrahed; but it was all curiosity, not the respect we generally meet with. Soller is radical, and would like to turn the world upside down, themselves uppermost, of course. The barouche was an object of envy to them, not awe inspiring. Why should we travel by carriage when they could only travel by diligence? This was the keynote to their character. However, it was a change, and we rather enjoyed it.

"I am anxious to see the beautiful old lady," said H. C.—hypo-

critically, as I afterwards discovered. "I think she will make a charming sketch."

I looked at him for a moment, but was disarmed by his innocent air. "I should have thought the girls at the Fonda del Pastor almost a prettier subject," I remarked; "but I am no judge."

"The old woman will be more pathetic," said H. C., "and pathos is everything. With this wonderful old-world town, this ancient influence and atmosphere, we shall be able to compose one of those weird, solemn, gloomy effects—one of those 'lux in tenebræ' compositions that Israels so much delights in and Rembrandt has immortalised. I feel that we shall do something that will raise our fame and hand us down to posterity. We shall find ourselves on the line in next year's Academy. Don't you feel very enthusiastic?"

I felt very bewildered, which was just the effect he wanted to produce. In the midst of it, we drew up to the door of the fonda: the other fonda, I concluded. It was not a very inviting place, but one must not always judge by outward appearances. It had the look of a very fourth-rate café. One sees hundreds of such places in Paris, and would as soon think of entering them as of putting to sea in a fire-engine. The door was open, and disclosed sundry chairs and tables, a distant bar, and a mysterious object that was rolling round and round apparently without hands, and seemed made for the express purpose of crushing dead men's bones. An instrument of torture, no doubt.

An old man came forward.

"We are all right—the old woman's husband," said H. C., hastily proceeding to hand out some of our traps.

"But A. said nothing about a husband," I remonstrated. "I somehow fancy we have come to the wrong place."

"Not at all," replied H. C. "The old woman naturally has a husband, and here he is. Very decent looking old man."

In we went.

"Mariquitariosita!" the old man called out stentorially, "come down at once."

"Mariquitariosita!" I exclaimed. "What a long name for an old woman—and how curious! Sounds romantic. Capital title for a poem, H. C."

"Excellent," he replied. "The place is brimful of subject and suggestion. I am charmed." And he skipped gracefully into the room with a hornpipe step.

Here an old lady appeared—the old lady, we concluded—and H. C. dropped the hornpipe. But instead of being eighty, she couldn't have been sixty. And instead of coming down, she issued upwards, from lower regions. I thought A. had greatly exaggerated her charms. In fact, I felt altogether in a somewhat topsy-turvy condition.

The old man led the way upstairs, and we found the rooms a great

improvement upon those below. Here, also, to my astonishment, we came upon two very pretty and modest girls, neatly dressed, with handkerchiefs becomingly adjusted about the head. H. C. looked somewhat confusedly at me out of the corners of his eyes, but even now the truth did not penetrate to my slow brain.

"Mariquitarosita," explained the old man. "My daughters. Children, do your best for these gentlemen, distinguished visitors from the great England."

"But there must be some mistake," I said, a glimmer of light penetrating to my obscure mental vision. "Is this the Fonda del Pastor?"

"Si, senor," replied the old man. "No mistake."

I began to suspect foul play. "H. C.," said I, "is this your doing?"

Silence met me. I turned. H. C. had disappeared. I now felt that I had been tricked, imposed upon. I went on and found H. C. unpacking at a furious rate.

"Have you had a hand in this matter?" I asked.

"I have a hand in this bag," returned H. C., diving down and bringing out a sketch-book. "I haven't a hand in anything else. This is an unfortunate mistake of the coachman's. He is horribly stupid, you know: cottony-woolly."

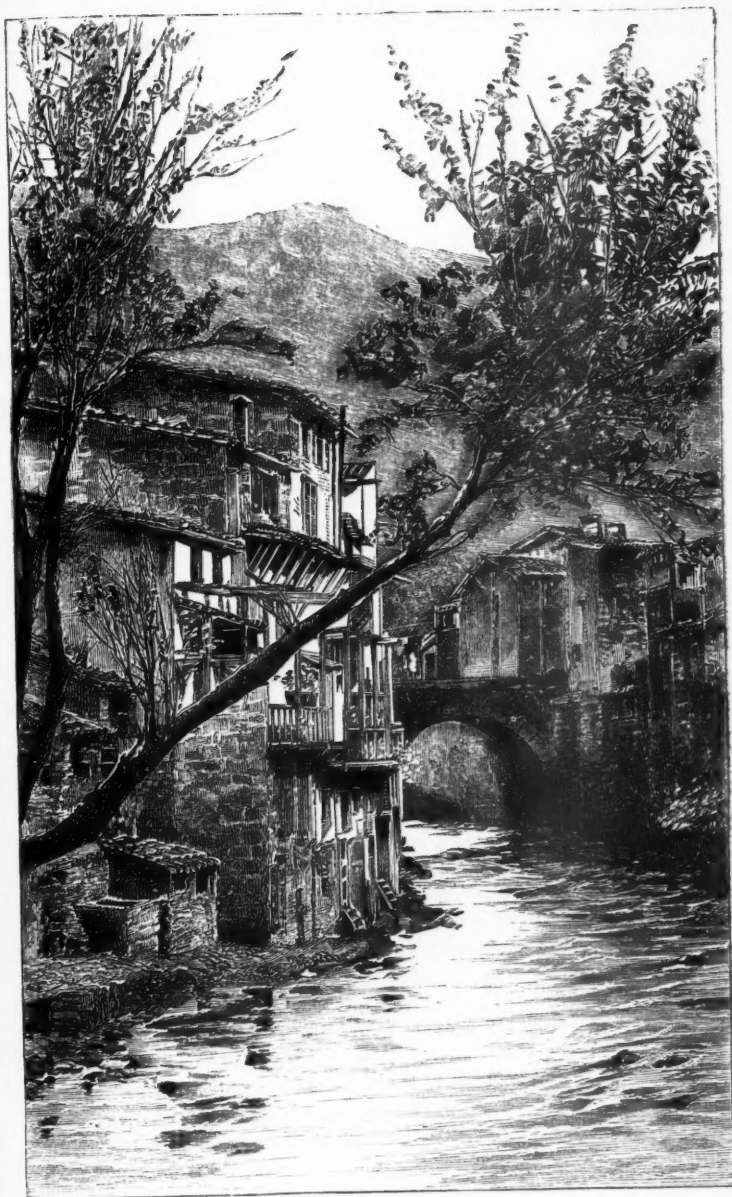
"But what about A. and B.?" I went on. "We agreed not to go to the same fonda, you remember."

"Well, they can go to the other fonda. I shall be delighted to feel that they are more comfortably lodged in Soller than we are. They will have the benefit of the old lady's experience. We will put up with the gaucheries of these unsophisticated girls."

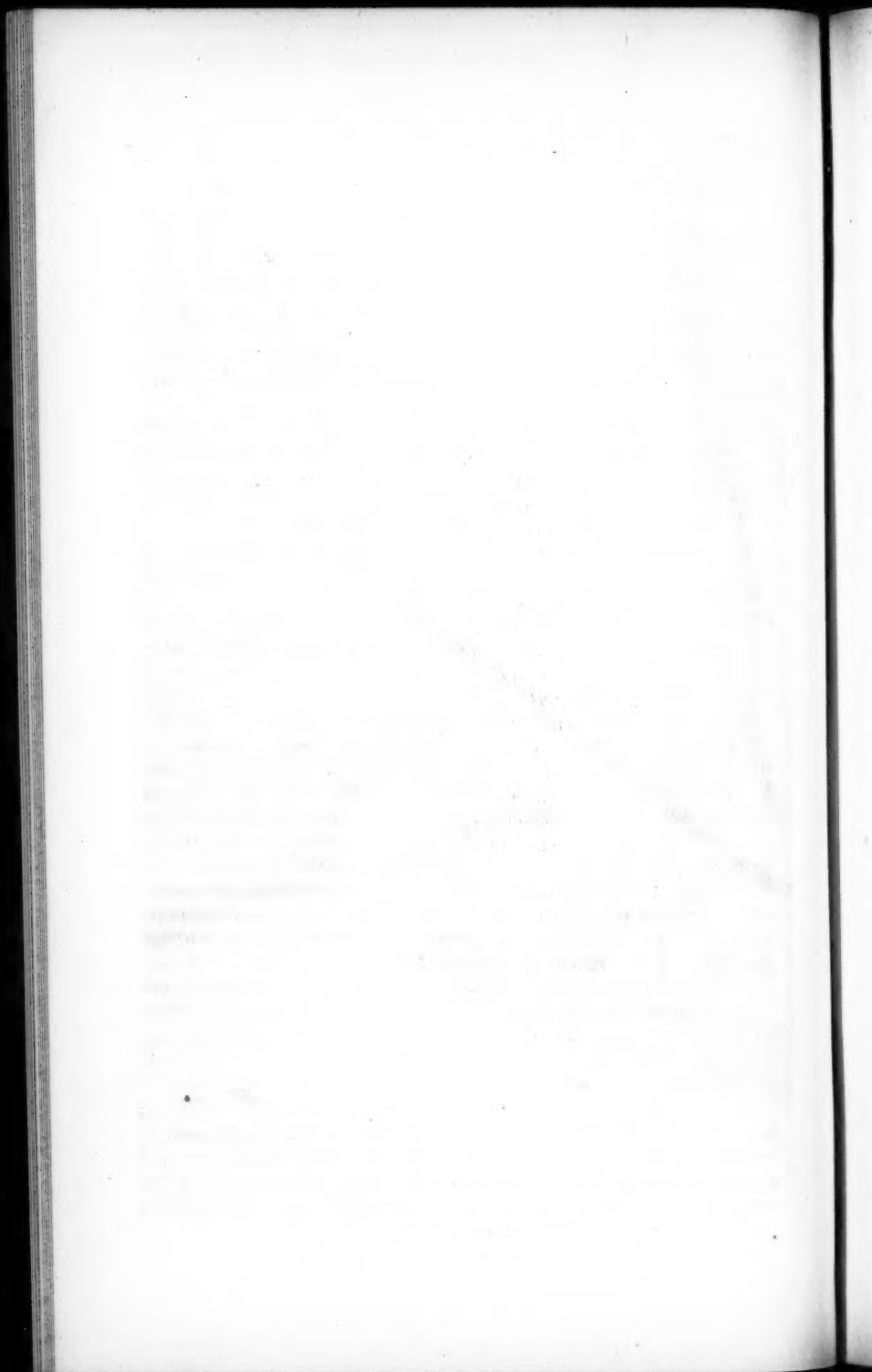
I found there was nothing to be done but to make the best of it. So hastily scribbling a note to A. explaining the mistake, and begging him to make use of the other fonda, we entrusted it to the coachman, who was about to start on his return journey.

"You'll see," said H. C. "They'll do nothing of the kind. They'll come here. It's all bosh about the limited resources of the inn. It would accommodate a small army. My firm opinion is that they wanted the place all to themselves, and their beautiful spirit of philanthropy was sheer selfishness. There!" cried H. C., getting quite excited, "now the cat's out of the bag. I've put my foot into it, but I can't help it."

We very soon found out that the long and incomprehensible name was in reality two names, shared by the girls. One is Mariquita, the other Rosita. The one is as shy and timid as a gazelle, very soft and gentle in her ways. Her pretty eyes are the colour of tea, and there is a soft haze over them, something like the tea veiled by the ascending steam. The effect is curious and charming. Mariquita has never left her mother's side, never been out of the island. One never hears her voice, and if you ask her for anything, she brings it



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you with a little appealing, modest manner that, H. C. says, is extremely winning.

Rosita, on the contrary, is much more a woman of the world. She is not in the least bold or forward: very far from it; but she is evidently born to command in her small sphere. She has seen something of the world, too. Has travelled about Spain with her father, through France; even knows something of Paris. This gives her confidence, and she goes about her work with the certainty of doing the right thing. Like Mariquita, she is dark, but somewhat smaller. Her profile is well cut, and her voice has a slightly pathetic cadence, which H. C. says gives him a curious thrill at the heart. I have never experienced this sort of thing, and don't quite know what he means. I wonder whether it indicates any weakness or disease of that organ? If so, I should think he ought to live a very emotionless life, and give up writing poetry.

First impressions, I have said, ought not always to be trusted, and, on the whole, we are very comfortable in this *Fonda del Pastor*. At first we feared we should have to take our meals in the room we first entered, which is nothing but a large bar with a stone floor. Men come in and sit down, and smoke bad tobacco, and drink beer or anisette. The infernal machine in the corner is, I find, a mill for making chocolate, and is turned from below by an invisible mule. The old landlord does a great trade in chocolate, which sends forth its sickly and overpowering odour.

So we were glad to find that, like the mule, we, too, had to go below for our repasts. It is a most curious and interesting place; a sort of civilised dungeon, very clean and cheerful. In the first room, the thick stone walls are whitewashed, and the tables are covered with pure white cloths. We have never seen anything quite like it, and feel hundreds of miles underground. Curious lamps give us their light. Rosita flits about and waits upon us, and gives us lessons in Mallorquin, the pathetic cadence of her voice making it very soft and sweet. At least, H. C. says so. Mariquita, the gazelle, on the contrary, makes herself scarce. She stays above, knitting, and retires as much as possible from observation.

At the end of the room, a thick stone archway leads to the kitchen. And framed in this archway, as it were, the old mother of the girls stands at her range, cooking our modest repast. This also we find very interesting. It all forms a most unusual picture; and here I tell H. C. is subject enough to hand him down to posterity.

The old mother is a very nice old woman. She looks as if she had not found life a bed of roses. There is a singularly sad expression upon her placid face, which might be a protest against fate and fortune. Her features are strangely immovable, nothing ever changing except a little frown between the brows, which comes and goes like small clouds over an autumn sky. She smiles rarely, but when she does so, it is not easily forgotten. She is little and stout, and pro-

bably was once slim and comely, as her girls now are. Time, like an ever-rolling stream, not only bears its sons and daughters away, but robs them of their charms. What would one not give for the elixir of perpetual youth !

Rosita waits upon us very assiduously. She evidently racks her imagination to invent little things that will give us pleasure. Our Mallorquin lessons come in as interludes between the courses. She enquires very politely after A., shows anxiety as to when he is next coming ; smiles serenely when we tell her that he will be here in two days ; smiles incredulously when we say that as we have come here he will no doubt go to the other fonda.

Altogether we feel that our reign and our Mallorquin lessons will be over when the diligence bears A. to the hospitable doors of the Fonda del Pastor. Somehow, Rosita's incredulous smile has been more convincing than the strongest argument. We are quite sure, now, that A. will not go to the other fonda. I have had a stern lesson and a severe shock. A.'s beautiful spirit of disinterestedness has dissolved into thin air, like the baseless fabric of a vision. My faith in human nature has declined.

The more we see of this old town the more we are in love with it. The streets are narrow, but quaint and characteristic. It possesses none of the old courts that charm us in Palma, but it has compensations. From many a house there issues the sound of the loom. At a certain hour of the evening, as you pass, you suddenly hear the people within their doorways, repeating their vespers. One sees this kind of thing in the Tyrol, where, in the small mountain villages, it is still more picturesque. There it is universal, but it is not so in Soller. The women croon their devotions with a curious intonation. Real music and melody is unknown to them. They have no high aspirations and no ecstasies. Here, as in all parts of Mallorca, they are very priest-ridden. The priestly element predominates, and, compared with the population, the number of priests is very large. I cannot say much for their personal appearance ; we have only seen about two priests since we entered the island that we really thought looked decent members of society. One was driving a country cart, and was so clean and clean shaven, looked so pleasant and straightforward, that we quite wished to make his acquaintance as a phenomenon. But he passed on in a cloud of dust and we saw him no more.

The other was perambulating the cathedral in Palma, came up to us, and very politely showed us some of its stronger points. I was also introduced a few days ago to a worthy canon. We had a good deal of interesting conversation, carried on in French. He was fat and jolly and merry ; evidently took life very easily ; was one, I am sure, to grant many indulgences ; had no narrow views of life ; did not think that he or I had been sent into the world to make ourselves miserable with perpetual and penitential ordinances. One likes to

come across these large-minded ecclesiastics. At heart, I believe they are better, hold healthier views of life and religion, than your ascetic monk who would spend his days in fasting and his nights in vigil.

Soller seems rather overcrowded. As I have said, the people stare at us with a large amount of misdirected curiosity. When we sally forth with our camera we are especial objects of attention. They are all anxious to be taken, and we have no difficulty in getting any amount of ready-made groups. The people are very civil, too, and allow us to go through their houses into their gardens to photo-



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graph views from the river. This is by far the most picturesque part of Soller. It would, indeed, be difficult to match elsewhere this strange accumulation of old bridges and ancient houses, and dilapidated walls, and dried up torrent.

About us are the hills, towering around, shutting in our horizon. It becomes oppressive. We feel as if we wanted a free current of air. The place, I have said, is enervating, and the people are pallid. The church tower rises in the midst, square and prominent. It is an ancient building, but so altered and renewed that its antiquity is lost. We went in this afternoon. A special service was going on, and the place was crowded. A preacher in the pulpit was holding forth with much voice and gesticulation. Faces were upturned to him. The profound obscurity was relieved only by lighted candles on the far-off altar. Of course all this is very

effective. We should be impressed by it ourselves, you and I, if we had not been born to happier influences. Yet, if they are sincere, and we all get to Heaven at last, what matter the road that has led us there? To whom little has been given, of them little will be required.

We soon had to make the best of our way out again. The atmosphere was heavily charged. H. C. turned faint.

We went straight off to the port of Soller. It is about two miles or so from the town, and the walk is a very lovely one. The whole way is lined on either side with orange and lemon groves. The trees are laden and bowed down with their beautiful fruit: golden balls nestling amidst richest verdure. Nothing is greener and fresher than the foliage of the orange trees.

People were at work, looking after their fruit harvest; pruning and tending. They seem very glad to see us, and ask us to go into the groves and pluck the fruit. Nothing loth, we do so. They pick us the ripest oranges, and we revel in the delicious scent and flavour. It is delightful to walk amongst these groves, under the trees, whilst the hot sun over-head warms the fruit and scatters its perfume upon the air, and flecks our path with dancing lights and shadows. We are in a new world, and what a world!

The men, too, are so civil and polite that they win our hearts. They look their best, dressed in white shirts, with a scarf tied round their waist. If they have any curiosity about us, it is discreetly veiled. Unfortunately we cannot keep up any conversation. A word here and there is understood, and the rest goes by signs. Mallorquin is very different from Spanish. The strange thing about the former is, that so many of its words resemble the French; so much so, that a Mallorquin going off into the Béarnais district of the Pyrenees will manage to get on very comfortably with his native language. At the end of a month I am quite sure that we should speak excellent Mallorquin, if we chose to apply ourselves to the task.

Strolling into these orange groves, holding mute conversations with the workmen; delighting and being delighted; seeing the best of life and thinking the best of mankind under these sunny skies; it takes us a very long time to get through our two miles to the port.

But we are there at last. Before us is the beautiful harbour, its entrance formed by green slopes wide enough to admit goodly-sized vessels. Each height is crowned with a lighthouse. The blue waters of the harbour are calm and beautiful as the Mediterranean can ever be. On the right reposes a small fishing village, ancient and very picturesque. The whole place is very quiet, the image of peace and serenity. Not a human being is anywhere visible. They are sleeping, or out at sea, or working in the fields. From this port many of the oranges and the produce of the island are shipped and sent out into the world. Amongst this produce I should make especial mention to you of the green almonds of Mallorca. They

are the most delicious and delicate of fruits, resembling a filbert some hundred times refined.

This port of Soller is one of the prettiest spots in the island. All the ports of Mallorca are more or less beautiful. There is such infinite repose about them ; you feel so out of the world. Of bustle and confusion there is none. With the exception of Palma they are all apparently abandoned ; reminding one of the creeks and inlets of some of the far-away islands in the North Sea ; shores that are given up to solitude and rest, and the clang of the wild bird. I never hear the cry of a sea-gull, or catch sight of a cormorant on the wing, or see an oyster-catcher diving beneath the surface, but at once I am transported to those wild and solitary haunts, where amidst the dash of the waves and the echoing of the rocks, and the scream and whirl of myriads of birds, some of my happiest and healthiest hours have been passed.

We turned back from the port, down the long, straight road, and past the orange and lemon groves, where the men were still at work and gave us friendly greeting. More picturesque than ever seems the little old town, which really is almost matchless. Looking over the bridge on either side you have the backs of the houses, all forms and sizes. Balconies overhanging, windows large and unglazed ; double roofs where clothes are hanging out to dry ; cages given up to the pigeons. The shallow stream runs over its bed, all fury past until the next rains come. Rough and picturesque steps lead down from the walls. Across, there, is one of the large wells, and some twenty or thirty women are all washing and scrubbing for their very lives. An old tree bridges the stream. The church tower stands out boldly, contrasting with those far-off hills. All this H. C. has faithfully reproduced, and I am therefore able really to place the town before you as it exists. But there are a thousand-and-one other and lovely nooks which it is impossible to send you.

When we entered the fonda it was growing late. The diligence had arrived. There was a certain atmosphere of bustle and arrival about the inn. We felt that we were invaded. Instinct told us that A. and B. had put in an appearance : for two days have passed since we came to Soller.

"I told you so," said H. C., triumphantly. "I knew how much they would go to the other fonda, and put up with the beautiful old lady. I really feel quite pleased that we have circumvented them."

This appeared so very improper a frame of mind, that I was about to administer a lecture when A. and B. appeared upon the scene.

"So glad that you have come here," said A. "So much more jolly to be all together. Lots of room and any amount of resources."

I could not quite reconcile this statement with what had gone before ; but I am beginning to think there is something strange in the Mallorquin air, and everything I don't understand I immediately put down to atmosphere.

"It won't be for long," I said. "We leave to-morrow. Our lordly barouche is to be here at three o'clock."

"What!" cried A. "Return to Palma without going up the Puig Major? Absolutely impossible. It is not to be thought of. We will send a note by the return diligence, countermanding the lordly barouche, and to-morrow we will all go up the Puig Major, and make a grand day of it."

So, by sheer force of determination on A.'s part, it was settled. The Puig Major, you must know, is the highest peak on the island. It is a day's excursion, and, I believe, very hard work. I have agreed, but I tremble. As I sit here to-night, writing to you, I wonder what lies in store for me to-morrow; and whether, when night comes round once more, I shall be alive and again able to take up my tale for your benefit.

For night has fallen, the town is steeped in silence, the house in repose. Across the table H. C. is sketching. He is so charmed with Soller that for the moment he has forgotten all about poetry. He makes a remark every now and then, and we compare notes and go over the day's charming experiences. Occasionally I hear a muttered "Philanthropy, indeed!" "Disinterestedness, forsooth!" which seem rather to indicate the bent of his thoughts. And once he startled me by the loud exclamation of "Well, some men *are* green!" upon which he apologised, and explained that he was thinking of the trees he was washing in, and meant to say trees were green, not men. It was a *lapsus linguæ*. I put it all down to atmosphere.

Only the watchman disturbs the silence of the streets, with the same old cry. The stars above are large and glorious. We see the outlines of distant hills like huge monsters, portentous and weighted with omen.

Shall you be surprised to hear that to-night, at dinner, we had no Mallorquin lesson. A. monopolised the whole of Rosita's attention. I thought there would have been a duel between him and H. C., and had the greatest difficulty in keeping the peace. Serene skies without, but within, between these two, who each in his way can be so charming, thunder and lightning, storm and tempest.

Atmosphere undoubtedly.

And now in the very small hours of the night we retire. I waft you a thousandfold benediction, and pray all good angels have you in their holy keeping.



PLAYING WITH FIRE.

IN a crowded London drawing-room, one evening near the end of May, Howard Scott was leaning against the door-post, rather sulkily wishing that the Season and its votaries were transported "to the planet Saturn" to look for political economy and the lost arts. He was at this "At Home" in attendance on his mother and sister, and up to the present moment had experienced no pleasure sufficient to counterbalance the discomforts of a heated atmosphere, an over-filled room, and a subdued Babel of small talk.

Among the ever-flowing and ebbing tide of evening-dressed humanity, which passed half-an-hour here on its way to and from the houses of other friends, there was no one possessing for him any special interest, though the majority greeted him with bow and smile, or with indescribable masculine gesture of recognition. He was just wondering whether it would be worth while to try and force a passage across the room to the neighbourhood of a certain sparkling blonde of his acquaintance, when his hostess's voice broke on his ear.

"Come," she said, "I want to introduce you to our beauty."

Lady Gamgee was very literary indeed, and very fond of all young writers; so it happened that Howard Scott—junior critic of the "Free Lance"—was rather a favourite of hers. He followed obediently, and she led him to the door of the conservatory, near which was standing the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Her hair was dark brown, so were her eyes; her figure was tall, and beautifully formed. In defiance of fashion, she wore a clinging dress of softest Indian muslin, and absolutely no ornaments, save a branch of white lilac across her bosom.

"Miss Severn, let me present Mr. Scott to you."

A mutual bow. The introductory words were the briefest and commonest of commonplace, and to Scott they merely meant a not unwelcome permission to try whether this exquisite vision had a soul and a mind, or was merely waxwork. But to her the words were the trumpet of battle, the preface to a strong, determined effort. In that swift upward glance which she gave him before either of them spoke, she reviewed the field, the position of the attacking and opposing forces, the possibilities of defeat; and as her lashes fell again, her unspoken conclusion was this:

"I *can* make you like me, and I *will*!"

Howard opened with some feeble remark about the weather, which, it being May, in London had, of course, been rainy.

"Yes," said Miss Severn, slowly moving her large white fan. "I have just come from Madeira, and this climate seems to me to combine the acme of dreariness with the quintessence of neuralgia."

"You have just come from Madeira," he said, quickly. "That accounts —"

"For what?"

"For my not having seen you before."

"Then I may conclude that you go out a great deal," she said, "and that not to know you argues oneself unknown."

"Not quite that," he returned, smiling. "But I am pretty constant at my people's chariot wheels. It is not often that I get any reward for my devotion, though,"—and as he said it, his look implied that on this occasion at least, he *had* been rewarded.

"I suppose you are not fond of going out?"

"Well, I don't think the game is worth the candle."

"No doubt you have exhausted all this sort of thing, but to me it is rather amusing—and exciting besides. At one of these receptions one might meet someone one had been longing to know for years."

"Yes, that is an advantage which Lady Gamgee's and kindred receptions have over those which are less by way of being literary. One may sometimes, among the Postlethwaites and Maudles, meet a real star."

"That is what I meant. It is sad, though, that as a rule, the 'star' does not think it worth while to shew any heavenly spark, and considers remarks on the heated atmosphere to be quite good enough for us sublunary mortals."

"Well, if the 'star' happens to be Dr. Wiseman, or one of the hygienic set, his ideas on that subject might be worth having."

"I never did care about hygiene, and if I had, one hears so little else in Madeira that I should have been long ago surfeited with it. I wish you would tell me who all these people are."

"Of course you know that handsome man talking to Lady Gamgee?"

"I know that it is Sir John Holman, the new R. A., but I have never had the honour of speaking to him."

"You care for his work then?"

"Care for it? I worship it. Yet one can't help wondering whether there are such lovely women as he paints, or whether they have birth only in the consciousness of the master."

"I know there are such women," he answered, in a slightly changed voice, and looking at her earnestly.

"I am so glad to hear you say so, for it makes me hope that I may some day meet some of them," she said, smiling. "They might inspire my pencil as they do his."

"You paint then?"

"Yes. I have given a good deal of time to it. There was so little to amuse one at home."

"Have you ever exhibited? No? I should have so liked to see your pictures."

"Do you think you would? Perhaps you may some day; who knows? But are you a critic?"

"I write a little about art; but one doesn't care, after D'Israeli's definition of critics, to call oneself one of the band. When and how do you think that 'some day' is likely to arrive?" He leaned forward and spoke rather eagerly.

"I am coming to stay with Lady Gamgee next week, and then—it is not impossible that—ah! here is mamma. I see we are to leave."

He had the satisfaction of seeing her to her carriage, and then strolled clubwards, smoking a meditative cigar.

When Laura Severn reached her room that night she dismissed her maid pretty promptly, and unlocking her desk sat down before it. She drew out first a likeness of a young and pretty girl, then some letters, dried flowers and little schoolgirl treasures, and, lastly, the portrait of the same girl, beautifully painted, evidently a perfect likeness, but unmistakably taken *after* death, and so invested with a peculiar and horrible fascination.

Laura read the letters and kissed the portraits with passionate, loving lips. Then, laying her head on her outstretched arms, she sat and thought far into the night. The outcome of her reflections at length formulated itself in words something like these:

"He can love; he shall love. I will not spare him one pang of the pain *she* endured."

Three years before, Laura's cousin had died. The two girls, who were about the same age, had been brought up together in Madeira, and were like sisters. At seventeen Constance went to England on a visit to an aunt of hers. She remained away about six months, receiving several eligible offers of marriage, which she refused. Though never possessing Laura's brilliant, beauty, she had had a sweet, mignonne face, and large blue eyes with a very potent charm of their own. To most of the admiration she attracted she was quite indifferent, but Howard Scott's coming, as her aunt noticed, could always make her cheeks flush and her eyes brighten. He paid her a great deal of attention, and carried matters to such a point that the possible engagement was publicly canvassed. Then, when all the world was expecting the announcement of his betrothal to Constance, he took himself off to Scotland, without a word of farewell, leaving behind him a note to Constance as cold as snow and as indifferent as the monument. Soon after it was reported that he was paying great attention to the eldest daughter of Sir Alexander McDougall, the great Glasgow ship-builder.

Constance hid her grief bravely, and went steadily through her few remaining engagements, but when the last had been fulfilled she gave way, and returned to Madeira to die. Her chest was always delicate, and now she had grown careless of herself. She caught a violent cold by staying out in the rain one day "to walk off the dismals," as she told Laura, and in a month she was dead.

The night she died the cousins were alone together, and then Constance told, brokenly, the full story of that London season. No one but Laura ever heard it, and in her it engendered pity, grief, agony, and one other thing which overwhelmed and swept away all these before it—a supreme desire for *revenge* for her friend's spoiled life. When loving hands had made all fair round what was mortal of Constance Harewood, Laura took her easel into the room of death, and with the rapid skill of which she was even then mistress, painted a portrait of the dead face, with a fidelity no less unswerving because every measuring look at that face was anguish intense, every touch of the brush a new thrust of bitterest misery.

Between the two had existed the closest, warmest, and tenderest friendship, and half Laura's life seem buried in that grave. She seemed to know no way of living in a world where there was no Constance.

But while she wept passionate, bitter tears for her lost friend, the idea of avenging her remained constant with her, and helped her to bear her grief; and during the years of their mourning seclusion she devised scores of plots for its consummation. When her twentieth birthday arrived she begged to go to England, and her mother, who had long been a widow and her own mistress, acceded to her request, leaving the aunt, who had been Constance's chaperon, in charge of the Funchal establishment.

All through diversions of the life of gaiety which she now began to lead, Laura never permitted any other thought to take precedence of her fixed idea. She had never before gone much into society, and had passed nearly all her life with books and paintings; and a girlhood thus spent among ideals and unrealities was responsible for her romantic estimate of life. Her almost perfect beauty had as yet, strangely enough, made her no enemies. She seemed to be no one's rival. Perhaps because a girl must have been vainer than human nature is, or lovely beyond all rivalry to compare herself with the beautiful Miss Severn.

This combination of charms and faults duly went to stay with Lady Gamgee, and when Howard called there he saw her, but was not to see, so she decreed, her paintings. "Not yet, at any rate," she said.

Lady Gamgee being a very old friend of Scott's, he ventured on calling nearly every day; was asked to dinner once or twice, and was always careful to find out what Laura's engagements were, and at garden party, ball or reception, somehow they seemed bound to meet. Their acquaintance rapidly ripened into intimacy.

Mrs. Severn was spending a quiet month in Derbyshire with an old school friend, and, as she disliked London, was very glad to leave Laura with a responsible guardian, for so she considered Lady Gamgee to be. Poor Mrs. Severn! Had she but known that Howard Scott, who had wrecked her niece's happiness, was an almost

daily visitor in Eaton Square, she would hardly have enjoyed the rocks and woods and waters as much as she did.

And Laura's plans were succeeding *au mieux*. Scott's devotion would have been apparent to any observer less self-absorbed than Lady Gamgee. Soon would come Miss Severn's grand triumph, the moment when he would offer his love, and she would refuse it. This was her aim, her end: that he should love her as madly as it was in him to love any woman, and that she should laugh at him!

She hated him—or so she said to herself. And of course she must have hated him, or why did her hand tremble when his touched it? Why did her heart beat so when his foot was on the stairs? Why did her face flush if only his name were mentioned? Why did she care only for the time she passed with him, and think all of her life wasted that was not spent on her one great object?

"It is because I hate him so," she said to herself. "I had not thought it was in me, so to hate anyone. Yet I disguise it well! Ah! I should be a good actress."

Every night she used to take out the painted portraits of Constance and kiss them and talk to them. At first she used to whisper to them the words Scott had spoken during the day, but after awhile she discontinued this, and used simply to sit and think over the talk they two had had, and feel mildly exultant at the progress she had made.

Did any thought ever come to her that it was a cruel deed she was engaged in—that vengeance was not a weapon meant for hands like hers? If such scruples ever came she stifled them at once, and repeated to herself:

"An eye for an eye. It is *justice*; nothing more."

One June afternoon, when the earth was sleepy with heat, and the pavements dusty and baked, Howard Scott exchanged the glare and glitter of the streets for the cool, rose-scented boudoir in Eaton Square, where the electric-blue hangings made the temperature seem a degree or two lower than it really was.

"I am so sorry! Lady Gamgee is in the agonies of a crisis: the third volume of '*Pastors and Masters*,'" said Laura, as she came forward to greet him, her long, soft draperies trailing behind her and making a palish pink light in the sun-blind shaded room. "I believe we shall have to entertain each other till tea arrives."

"I wish you would entertain me by showing me your paintings," he said, as he sat down on a low chair and began lazily to stroke Lady Gamgee's oldest and fattest pug.

"Do you?"

"Yes; very much indeed."

A pause.

"Well," abruptly, "I will."

"This is very good of you," he murmured, as he held the door for her to pass out. "If I only knew how to thank you."

"You are right to be grateful," she said, smiling up at him. "But I never show my pictures unless I am sure of a proper amount of gratitude." And she went out.

"How charming she is," thought Scott, as he paced up and down, waiting for her return. "And how utterly different from everyone else in this dull monotonous world." And he went on to wonder whether she cared anything for him. Although he had not known her long, he knew that she was exceedingly proud, and very sparing in her favours. A thousand little nuances of difference between her manner to him and her manner to other men came one after the other to his recollection, and he could not help fancying that she must care for him a little. How was he to know that she was only acting a part—playing out a preconceived rôle? How was he to know that she did not truly approve him?

And he was a man on whom any woman might have looked with approval. Tall, strong and muscular, with brown curly hair, and a soft moustache some shades lighter—a pair of laughing, handsome, don't-care, Irish grey eyes, and a firm, well-shaped mouth.

Altogether "horribly handsome," as Laura confessed to herself when she re-entered the room with her portfolios of sketches. He hastened to take them from her, and place them on a table.

"Now," she said, "you are to have your curiosity gratified."

With that, they began to turn over the sketches. They were wonderful, lifelike, though not unfrequently faultful technically—and had a *verve* and go about them which surprised Scott, who had expected from Laura's paintings at most mediocrity. They were mostly faces and figures, and among them he recognised several mutual friends.

"What a splendid talent you have for catching likenesses?" he said, in conclusion. They had gone through most of the drawings, and he had expressed his admiration of each as it was inspected.

"They are more interesting than fancy sketches."

"Did you ever paint your own portrait?"

"Yes."

"Won't you show it to me?"

"Yes—if you wish it."

She turned to leave the room. As she passed him their eyes met, and she read in his that what she had so wished for would not now long be delayed.

When she had looked out her own portrait and some other sketches, she paused a moment before returning to the boudoir, and held her hand against her heart, which was beating violently. She felt a mad desire to hide herself away. She thought for a moment of not seeing him again. She felt a sudden new dread of him, and of what he might say or do, and an equally new distrust of herself in the character of avenger. Yet, was all her scheme of retribution to end in—flight? *No*. For Constance Harewood's sake she would go

through with what she had planned, and make Howard Scott suffer, even as Constance had done.

When she entered the boudoir Scott was standing by the window, with his hands behind his back. He did not hear her quiet footstep till she was close to him, and holding out a sketch to him. It was a portrait of Constance in the heyday of her youth and happiness. Laura watched him intently as his eyes fell on it, but her close scrutiny only showed her a shadow of disappointment pass over his face. Nothing more: no regret, no recognition.

"Why, this is not you," he said; "yet I think I have seen the face."

"It is Constance Harewood, my cousin."

"Oh, I remember Miss Harewood perfectly now, but I did not know she was your cousin. I met her several times a year or two ago." But even as he spoke his hand was impatiently stretched out for Laura's own likeness.

She put it into his hand. It was the best work of hers he had yet seen—a perfect image of her face, and into it she had conveyed her own soul. By some strange coincidence, her expression at the moment when Howard raised his eyes from the painting to her face was just that of the picture.

A wave of passionate admiration broke over his soul, and he said impulsively:

"I don't know how I dare to ask you for such a treasure, but may I keep this—for a while?" he added, seeing her look of astonishment.

A strange tumult seemed to stir within her, and she could hardly find voice to question:

"Why?"

"Because I love it!" he burst out. "Because I love you! Because I would keep it always by me, as I would have *you* always by me. Oh, my queen! will you let me love you?"

She had sunk into a low chair, and he was kneeling before her, clasping her hands and looking into her eyes; and as she looked at him a tide of sweet madness flooded all her soul, and shut out all thought of her meditated revenge—all thought of Constance—all and every thought but this, that he loved her, and that every fibre of her being vibrated to the deep delicious joy of being beloved by him. It was a moment of magnetic trance, but the revulsion of feeling was almost instantaneous.

"Good heavens!" she almost shrieked, starting up. "What sort of love can yours be? Here, look at this; and then tell me what such love is worth!"

And she held before his eyes the picture of Constance's dead face—the masterpiece of her painting—which she had destined to be an instrument of her revenge, and on which she now relied to speak for her and to crush Howard's pretensions as she felt she her-

self could *not* crush them. But he thrust the picture aside almost roughly, bestowing the most cursory glance on it.

"Laura—Miss Severn," he cried. "What do you mean? How can you expect me to look at anything but *you* at a moment like this? It is no time for play. I am in earnest. I love you with my whole soul—and I offer you my true and honest love. Will you have it? I want an answer. Don't tell me I was mistaken in the answer I thought I read in your eyes a moment ago."

"You do not deserve any answer—you will have none from me," she cried. "Let me go." And as she left the room poor Scott, with his whole heart on fire with love and suspense, and his brain whirling with conjecture and doubt, had to sit out three quarters or an hour of tea and literary gossip. He bore this—hoping that Laura would return, but she did not come, and he had to carry his restless, unsatisfied soul away from Eaton Square without seeing her again.

In the meantime the feelings of the would-be avenger were by no means enviable. Her first thought was that perhaps Constance's untried, untrained heart had mistaken the common civilities of society for something deeper. If Scott had ever *made love* to Miss Harewood, surely he *could* not be so callous at the sight of her pictured face. But she put these ideas from her as treacherous to her dead friend, and tried to steel her heart against her lover.

"It shows what a hardened, heartless villain he must be," she said. "To care no more than that! No doubt he makes love to a fresh girl every season."

Perhaps, though, he cared as little for her, Laura, as for any of the others: in which case, where was her vengeance? But no; she felt, she knew by unerring instinct, that he did love her, deeply and passionately. And something had awakened in her which tried to find excuses for Howard, and longed to prove him less wicked than he seemed, and which whispered that after all it was love for her and the sight of her beauty which had made him forgetful, even of Constance. Of course this thought ought to have been unmitigatedly painful. How then shall we explain the fact that Miss Severn derived from it an exquisite, unacknowledged pleasure?

In the midst of all her brain's confusion one thing only was plain to her: she must see him no more, and must complete her vengeance, if necessary, by letter. Stay; what could be a completer revenge than going away, as he had done from Constance, and leaving no word behind?

So it came to pass that the next day Laura told Lady Gamgee she must go down to her mother; she felt quite unequal to any more dissipation. A statement which her pale face and weary eyes quite bore out. Lady Gamgee, whom nothing ever surprised, parted from her with gently expressed regret, and by two o'clock, Laura and her maid were in the express for Bakewell. At parting, Laura had confided to her hostess that Mr. Scott had made her an offer, and

that she had refused him and did not wish him to know where she was.

Mrs. Severn was amazed at her daughter's telegram, but Mrs. Fraser, her friend, who never went to London and was a great invalid, was delighted to have a chance of seeing Laura; and the girl was very warmly welcomed. The mental strain which she had undergone had left her weak and pale, and she was made to go through a course of combined nursing and petting from which, however, she was often glad to escape for long walks alone. The monotonous peace of this country life soon reduced her state of confused elation and excitement to one of calm and even misery.

That calm was broken abruptly and violently one morning when her mother, at their tête-à-tête breakfast (Mrs. Fraser did not appear till noon), broke silence suddenly with a sharp exclamation of horror.

"What is it?" asked Laura. And her mother read:

"Sad Fatality at a Ball.—A shocking event occurred last night at a dance given by Lady Caroline Hill at her residence in Eaton Place. When the dancing was at its height, a gentleman was observed to leave his partner and make for the nearest settee; but, before he could reach it, he fell heavily to the ground. On raising him he was found to be quite dead. The unfortunate gentleman was a Mr. Howard Scott, well known in literary and artistic circles. He was a member of the 'Athenæum,' 'Arts,' and other clubs, and his death will be regretted by a large number of friends. Why," continued Mrs. Severn, "that must be the same man — But whatever is the matter, Laura?" For her daughter was gazing at her with wide, terror-filled eyes, and gasping vainly for breath.

The utter horror of this. The impassable barrier that Death reared between her and her lover showed her how hope had lived unrecognised in her heart all through these long, miserable days. And this very morning hope had had some food for growth, for, in an apologetic note from Lady Gamgee, saying Howard's importunity had driven her to enclose it, had come a letter from *him*. A passionate appeal which had caused those crushed doubts respecting the fidelity of Constance's story to rise again in Laura's breast. Had he not said that there must be some horrible mistake and misunderstanding? Did not her own heart echo his words? Was not his letter even then lying in her bosom? And now he was *dead*, beyond reach, beyond recall! Ah! now she knew too well that she loved him, but *he* would never know.

"What is it?" reiterated Mrs. Severn, anxiously. But Laura never answered. She had fainted.

When she recovered consciousness it was to tell her mother *all*, without any reservations whatever. Though she was inexpressibly shocked by the revelation of what she inwardly termed Laura's unchristian and revengeful spirit, she showed a very Christian forbearance herself, and did not reproach her daughter by one word or look

With the tender, all-embracing sympathy of which mothers seem to hold the merciful secret, she listened, condoled with and soothed her miserable child.

"Now, mother," said Laura at last, "there is only one thing left for me to do. I must see him."

"My poor child, it is quite impossible."

"Mother, I *will* go, and you must take me. There is no harm. There can be no harm, now he is dead."

She spoke with strange calmness.

"My dear, what would people say?"

"No one will know. Lady Gamgee will help us."

But her mother would not consent. As the day wore on, however, Laura's feverish excitement grew so intense that Mrs. Severn thought the lesser evil would be to take her to town and let matters take their course. So, with many apologies to Mrs. Frazer, they took the up train next morning.

Leaving their luggage at the Grosvenor, Mrs. Severn and Laura drove to Eaton Square. Lady Gamgee was at home, but engaged at the moment. If Mrs. Severn would not mind waiting? Mrs. Severn did not mind waiting, and they were shown into the boudoir.

Laura's heart, which had seemed turned to stone, stirred uneasily at the memories this room held for her. Here he had read so often to her; how soft and tender his voice had been. Here she had shown him her paintings; here he had held her hands and called her his queen; and now, neither here nor elsewhere, could she ever again hear that voice, feel that hand-clasp—never again!

She sat down in the same chair where she had sat when he asked her for her love, and leaned back with shut eyes, trying to picture that handsome bronzed face cold and set in death. Those eyes that had been so love-lighted closed stilly for ever, those once clasping hands coldly folded, but try as she would she could only think of him as she had last seen him, strong, tender, imploring—full of manhood's vigour and vitality.

"Ah, how changed he will be when I see him again." And as she thought it a slight movement in the room made her open her eyes.

Merciful Heaven! what was this? Here—now—unchanged, standing not two yards from her, the dead man himself. She started to her feet with an irrepressible cry. Then staggered and would have fallen but he caught her in his strong arms.

"Laura, can it be? Do you love me? Have you come yourself to bring the answer to my letter?"

"Then you are not dead," she gasped. "It was in the paper." Howard looked pale, as from mental trouble, but otherwise was as unlike a dead man as need be.

"Oh, I can easily explain that," he said. Then exultingly: "But you *cared* when you thought I was dead? Ah, then the answer is

to be the one I want." - At this moment he first perceived Mrs. Severn, who had hitherto remained speechless from astonishment.

"This lady—your mother—does she know?"

Mrs. Severn came forward: "I do not know how this false report of your death originated, sir," she said; "but I do know that your present conduct is utterly unjustifiable."

Howard's conscience did not seem to show him matters in this light, for he still kept his arm round Laura, who, in the delirious joy of this recovery of him, was utterly passive, and let him do with her as he would.

"Mrs. Severn," he said, "what, under Heaven, can you mean? I love your daughter, truly and honourably, and I am as innocent of any insult to you or to her as is the dead man whose fate you believed to be mine."

"What dead man?" It was Mrs. Severn who spoke.

"My cousin, Howard Brett Scott, who died two days ago, within a hundred yards of this house."

Hope long crushed stirred in Laura's heart, and shone on her eyes.

"Was it your cousin who deceived my cousin Constance?"

"It was certainly not I, beloved. If *that* is all that has stood between us, away with it for ever. I had the merest bowing acquaintance with Miss Harewood. My cousin was in the same set with her. But Lady Gamgee can tell you all about it, I dare say, if Mrs. Severn require further assurance. *You* cannot doubt me any more."

"No," said Laura; and Mrs. Severn came forward with outstretched hand:

"Forgive us; we have both misjudged you. I am assured of the truth of your story. Ah! here is Lady Gamgee." And she went into the writing-room to meet and greet that lady, who soon told her all that was needful about the other Howard and his efforts to obtain a wife with a fortune large enough to free him from his creditors.

Howard and Laura were alone once more in the little boudoir.

"Well, what is my answer to be?" he said, looking with great persistence into the downcast face.

"What do you want me to say?"

"Say—'Howard, I love you,' " was his moderate request.

"I wonder whether you will care to hear me say that when you know all, or whether you will not despise me and my love too?"

And with that she told him all.

"Can you forgive me?" she ended. "Do you not hate me for being so wicked?"

"Perhaps I might find it hard to forgive you if you had carried out your cruel resolve. But, after all, this misery was intended not for me, but for poor Howard, and he is beyond the reach of our punishment. And I am here, thank God, still within the reach of your love."

PERIL ON THE SEA.

A TRUE STORY.

THE little island of Kildena lies in the Arctic Ocean, seven miles to the North of Lapland. Formerly it was uninhabited, but, of late years, eleven families of different races have settled there for the sake of its fisheries. Undaunted by the privations and hardships of their chosen lot, they remain, year by year, on the barren island waiting with patience through the long night of winter.

They make and mend nets, put the little fleet of fishing boats into seaworthy condition, and fill up the remaining dark days with what ever pursuits or recreations the limited light given by fish and seal oils will permit them to follow.

One man, a Norwegian, had constituted himself general provider to the little colony, supplying them with food and clothes on the exchange system. He would take all the fish caught on the island and give to each fisherman, in return, a garment, or sack of rye flour, or some reindeer flesh, according to the several wants, and extent of each man's catch.

At intervals he sailed his boat to the mainland, and followed the course of a river for eighty miles, to Kola, a town of nine hundred inhabitants, principally Russian merchants. Here he sold his fish, and packed his little craft with a store of merchandise suited to the primitive needs of the settlers. In this way he had contrived to scrape together a sum equivalent to sixty pounds English money, which he stored away in a sealskin pouch, that always hung suspended from his neck.

Coin is scarce in those latitudes, and most of the fisherpeople are content to toil incessantly for a bare existence, knowing nothing of the mingled heartburnings and delights experienced by speculators. But Carl Hansen, the merchant of Kildena, whose adventures form the subject of this sketch, began to think this manner of amassing a fortune rather slow work ; and he determined, as soon as the fishing season was over, to leave the island, sell his boat at Kola, and make the best of his way to Bergen, his native town. There he hoped to lay out his small capital to better advantage, or otherwise go to sea in a merchant steamer.

When he first became the merchant of Kildena Island he planned to make a certain sum in a given time, which would enable him to return to Bergen, where a certain blue-eyed, fair-haired damsel, named Albertina, patiently waited for his home-coming, employing her time in spinning household linen in preparation for the one great event of her life.

This plan he had not yet accomplished. And now winter was coming on, during which season he would have to remain inactive, as far as money-making was concerned. The dull routine on the island would, he felt, be more than he could endure. Yet he spoke no word of his intention, not wishing to bear the reproaches he knew his fellow-colonists would heap upon him. But he stealthily made his preparations to leave the rigours of the Arctic Ocean when the twilight of winter began to shadow days as well as nights.

He soon completed his arrangements, and, under cover of darkness, conveyed his chest of clothes and much cherished belongings to his little four-ton cutter, *Concordia*. Then, telling the settlers he was going to Kola to post a letter, the last for the season, to his sweetheart, he set sail early on the morning of October the 16th, 1885.

A strong south-west wind was blowing, against which he found he could make no progress with his sails, so he pulled them down, and proceeded to ply the oars. But work as hard as he would, the distance between him and both mainland and island increased at every stroke. He was fain to rest on his oars from sheer exhaustion, and his dismay was great to perceive the speed at which his boat was spinning away from land, far upon the dreary waters of the Arctic Ocean.

Now Carl Hansen wished he had been less precipitate, and had waited for a more favourable wind. Contrasted with the dangers that surrounded him, bleak Kildena Island appeared like Paradise, and he thought, with longing, of the great fires, before which the islanders were just then preparing a savoury meal. But he was a hardy young man, a true descendant of the Norsemen, gifted with a nature that made him scorn the idea of hardship or danger. So he settled himself in the stern with the tiller in his hand, and, keeping the boat before the wind, he let her drift, and looked his position in the face.

He had brought no water with him, as he had intended to gather snow from the banks of the river, on his way to Kola. This he could have melted on a little bogie stove, which was fitted in the cuddy of the *Concordia*.

A supply of rye-bread and dried reindeer flesh, to last four or five days, was all the provision he had made; so he at once put himself on diet.

It was well he did so, for the wind continued from the same quarter for four days; then shifted, and a heavy north-west gale followed, which, in two more days, blew him back to the shores of Lapland.

All these days he had not been able to sleep, or leave his position at the helm, for if he had allowed the boat to turn broadside to the waves, she would inevitably have been swamped. Still he did not lose his strength of nerve, although despair often assailed him through the long, lonely watches, with little to eat, and nothing to quench the thirst that was now almost intolerable.

The Norwegian leather jacket and fur cap, fitted with lappets for the ears, warded off frost-bites. In addition to these articles of clothing, he drew over his reindeer-skin boots and nether garments a sleeping-bag, which is a bag made from reindeer or other skin, and long enough to envelope the whole figure ; a highly necessary protection in a climate where an inadvertent exposure to frost would deprive one of the toes for the rest of one's life.

So equipped, Carl Hansen mechanically continued his task of keeping the *Concordia* straight with the wind ; until, through the semi-darkness of the sixth day, he saw land close before him.

Then the blood quickened in his veins, and, steering for the shore, he searched for a sheltered cove. Fortunately, he found one that formed a miniature harbour. Here he made soundings with his oar, and found a position to anchor in, which enabled him to wade on shore. Wild and inhospitable was the scene. Rugged rocks, surmounted by spectral-looking glaciers, bound the dreary coast : not a sign of habitation or trace of humanity. He stood alone ; a solitary waif amid the towering, forbidding pinnacles of ice ; far from his fellows, and without hope of succour.

But two pressing needs blunted the sense of his desolation. Thirst and want of sleep made paramount demands for the present. So he collected a pailful of snow, and having melted it, satisfied himself with long, life-renewing draughts. Then he proceeded to make himself as comfortable as possible in the cuddy, and soon fell into a slumber which lasted for twelve hours.

He awoke refreshed, and, strong with new hope and energy, ate the small portion of food he had allotted for each day, washed it down with another copious draught of melted snow, and then proceeded to explore.

He managed to climb a rocky cliff that was not quite so inaccessible as most on the coast, and leaving marks as he went, that he might be able to retrace his path, he wandered a mile or two in each direction, hoping to find some trace of human life, perchance a Lapp fisherman's hut.

But Carl Hansen sought in vain ; nothing but a dreary waste of snow, edged and dotted over with hills of ice, whose points sharply pierced the air, rewarded his search.

The wind had now dropped to a calm, and, as he groped his way back to the boat, he could hear the sound of his own footfalls on the crisp snow echo behind him through the dead silence. To his excited imagination it seemed as though he was followed by a ghostly and relentless pursuer, who, with grim leisure, sure of his prey, dogged his steps. A panic of fear seized him, and he commenced to run ; then, with a strong effort of will, he checked his flight, and turned to peer around him. Nothing was visible, as far as he could see, but the stationary hummocks of snow and glaciers of ice, looming larger through the deepening darkness—for night was approaching.

When he sighted the landmark which would lead him to the cove where the *Concordia* lay at anchor, he felt relieved, and hastened now to gain his only shelter. He waded out to her, and then proceeded to pull off his long reindeer-skin boots, and replace them with dry ones, meanwhile debating with himself whether he should have another sleep, or pull along the shore while it was calm, in search of a settlement.

He decided upon the latter course, and was in the act of pushing his boat off into deep water, when he saw a white mass moving across the beach toward him. Experience told him that the object, which looked like an animated snow hummock, was, in reality, a polar bear, and he prepared for the attack he knew would follow, with speed and coolness.

When a polar bear is not hungry he is rarely aggressive, and a pelting with stones will often send him away. But, in winter, when birds and seals have disappeared, there is nothing for him to feed upon, and he crouches in some sheltered corner, dozing his time away, and just keeping life within him by sucking a kind of teat in his paw, through which he draws the blubber, that in summer, when food is plentiful, forms in a layer between the skin and flesh. It is when sharp hunger is gnawing at his vitals that he proves a dangerous foe to mankind.

So Carl, with the quickness taught by former circumstances, seized a heavy hatchet, and pushed rapidly off from the shore. But the bear was close upon him, and, with a furious roar, leaped toward the boat, missing her by a few feet. Carl, however, had barely time to jump from the thwarts to the well of the boat before the bear was by his side, with one huge paw upon the gunwale. A crashing blow from the hatchet loosened the bear's hold for a moment; the next, the animal re-appeared, and, howling with pain and fury, clutched the boat's side with his uninjured paw.

Carl knew that all was over with him if the bear once rose above the level of the gunwale; so, giving the axe a tremendous swing, he brought it down on the paw with redoubled force, crushing the great bones and sinews of the brute, who fell back in the water, uttering fearful cries of impotent rage and agony, but disabled from returning to the attack.

All thought of further sleep was now at an end.

The calm weather made it possible for Carl to creep along the shore, at a short distance off the land, yet close enough for his practised eye to discover, through the bright starlit night, any trace of human life. But only the dreadful sameness of rock, ice and snow met his view; not even a bear enlivened the scene.

The wind again freshened, and he drifted three more days before he could return to land. Then once more he stranded his boat, drank some snow-water, and, in spite of fear of hungry bears, fell again into a deep, long sleep. Then, finding nothing more than barren

coast, he the second time trusted himself to the winds and waves, with the barest of hopes in his heart that rescue might come before it was too late.

Shortly the wind began to blow again and rose to half a gale, sending the poor little tossed-about *Concordia* out of sight of land. Despair began to take hold upon poor Carl's heart. He could see no prospect in store for him but this constant drifting before the wind, or the, perhaps, more terrible fate of being driven back to land, only to find death from cold and starvation on those terrible shores. He determined to eat the small portion of food that remained, and then lie down in the bottom of the boat and wait for the bitter end.

Fourteen days of misery had gone by since he had left Kildena Island. He wondered that his strength had held out so long !

Slowly and sadly he ate his last meal. Then the thought came into his mind that he would say his prayers, and lie down as if he were going to sleep, just as he used to do in childhood. He knelt upon the seat in the stern, and tried to remember the words his mother had taught him. Long forgotten and unused as they had been, they came back freely to his memory, and through the noise of the waves dashing against the boat, and the tossing from side to side, his heart and soul went into the simple words, and upward to his Maker.

They brought a strange calm with them, and a feeling of acquiescence with the fate that seemed inevitable. No terror-stricken raving broke from him at the approach of death ; he quietly thought of his betrothed at home in Bergen, and regretted that she would never know his end ; then resigned himself to the will of God. He turned to look in the direction of his native land, and a benediction on his dear ones at home came from his heart to his lips.

But as he rose upon the waves, against which he no longer did battle, his glance fell upon something which made his blood once more rush quickly through him. Could that dark object be a vessel ? Was it possible that, at this season, there could be anyone daring enough to navigate the Arctic Ocean ?

He drew his hand across his eyes, thinking that long watching had diseased his vision. He looked again. No, it was not a delusion ! He could see her coming nearer, and apparently steering in a straight line for his boat.

After about ten minutes' watching, he saw she was a steamer. Then another time elapsed ; how long Carl never knew, so intense was the strain upon his nerves ; but, when she came near enough he gave a succession of mighty shouts, which terminated in a scream, almost a yell, of despair, as the steamer moved on, apparently regardless of his cries for help.

But the shrillness of his last appeal penetrated to the ears of the officer of the watch, who leaned over the bridge and peered into the half-light, until he saw the poor little craft, tossed like a cork over the water in the steamer's wake.

Then he gave stentorian orders to put the ship about, and, when near enough, sent his voice over the seething waves to the poor castaway, who shouted hoarsely back, and eagerly caught the rope thrown to him by the crew.

The little *Concordia* was quickly drawn to the steamer's side, and one of the sailors went down to her.

It was well that he did so, for he found poor Carl half fainting with the revulsion of feeling he had experienced within the last few minutes.

The man spoke some cheering words to him in Swedish, and made a noose in the rope for Carl to sit in, and both were drawn on board the steamer. They took him to a comfortable berth, and gave him spirits in small quantities, until he revived. Then, after eating some food, he recovered sufficiently to tell his sad tale of privation and exposure, which awoke much commiseration among the crew. They were Swedes, on board the Swedish steamer *Gustav Tilborg*, laden with timber from Archangel, and bound for Bordeaux.

Carl learned that he had drifted two hundred and fifty miles from Kildena Island in the fourteen days since he started, hoping to reach Kola. An over-ruling Providence had, in his darkest hour, caused the wind to drive him in the track of the only steamer left to plough the waters of the Arctic Ocean.

Twelve days previously, the last English steamer had left Archangel with her cargo of timber. Beyond that date there is no certainty of getting out of the White Sea, for, as soon as frost sets in, it is liable to become a mass of ice, and vessels caught have to remain until spring breaks up the ice and sets them free. But the Swedes are a daring race, and the temptation of a much higher freight induced the captain of the *Gustav Tilborg* to risk a block. To this apparent chance, Carl Hansen owed his rescue from an untimely and terrible fate.

The warm-hearted crew of the *Gustav Tilborg* showed Carl unremitting kindness, and when the steamer put into Dartmouth in November, 1885, for a supply of bunker coal the captain gave him the choice of remaining there or proceeding to Bordeaux. He chose the former, and when the *Gustav Tilborg* went on her way he remained behind at Dartmouth, where the particulars of this sketch were obtained from his own lips.

Carl remained at Dartmouth some days, where his story made him an object of curiosity and interest, while his stalwart and well-built figure won universal admiration.

At his own request, the Norwegian consul shipped him to America, where, let us hope, he is making sufficient money—if he has not already done so—to return to Bergen, and reward the patient faithfulness of his Albertina.

A. W. P.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT MEADOW HOUSE.

THE old town of Fairbridge was looking its best in the sunshine of that perfect May morning. It was a place of many trees; even in the High Street, the soft wind pelted you with stray blossoms that came drifting over garden walls. Shops were made picturesque with a luxuriance of ivy growing all round doors and windows; most of the houses had balconies filled with flowers, that looked like gardens in the air. A church bell was chiming sonorously for eleven o'clock service; and two tall old gentlewomen, with a charming quakerish air about them, were entering a Gothic portal, with prayer-books in their hands.

"There are the Miss Earles," said Alma to her companion. "By the way, I have promised to call on them this afternoon. I hope Mr. Redburn won't be in one of his exacting moods, as I want to take you to Meadow House. You would like the Earles, I think."

She spoke in the most natural tone. Beatrice gave one quick glance at the delicate aquiline profile by her side, and saw that every feature was perfectly composed. Alma was walking along the High Street, in her pretty grey costume, looking the very embodiment of calm ladyhood.

"Now we are coming to the post-office," she went on after a little pause. "Next-door to the bank, you see," she added, as Beatrice guiltily posted her letter. "Our old doctor lives in this house with the great brass plate on the door. He comes once or twice a week to see Mr. Redburn, and I'm afraid he has a bad opinion of him. I have great faith in Dr. Bendall."

"I don't think Mr. Redburn has a very good opinion of his own case," said Beatrice. "He seems hopeless about getting well."

"He will never get well. He ought to have left India years ago. Papa wonders how he ever lived to come home."

"Does it not make you nervous to have such an invalid in your house?" Beatrice asked.

"I am not often nervous," Alma replied; "and papa is really fond of him, and does not find him in the least troublesome. To us, he is always pleasant and yielding enough; I fear he keeps his tyranny for you alone."

"I shall try not to mind it; but I can't help wishing that he would

take it into his head to be guardian to some other girl. Heaven sends almonds to those who have no teeth! I can't be as grateful for his favour as I ought to be."

"It is curious," said Alma, "that you are not better pleased at the thought of being an heiress. I don't think you quite realise what a delightful thing money is."

"But one may pay too high a price even for such a delightful thing as money. One may have to give up freedom—liberty of thought and action—the companionship one loves best—and these things are far more satisfying than a fortune."

"You are afraid that Mr. Redburn will want to take you away from the Miltons," Alma remarked. "I believe he is a little jealous of them."

"I cannot leave Mrs. Milton; I have told him so."

"And precisely because you have told him so, he will return to the subject again and again. My poor, dear child, he will never let you go back to Wimpole Street, if he can help it! He means to keep you a prisoner at Oak Lodge until he has formed his plans."

"Is he really so unreasonable?" asked Beatrice, with a tremor in her voice.

"He really is. We will try to make the captive as happy as possible; but it will be a lengthy captivity, I assure you."

"No," said the girl, with a shake of the head; "however pleasant captivity may be, I cannot endure it long. You are very good to me, Miss Lindrick, and Oak Lodge is a charming place, but there are others whose claims must not be forgotten."

"Ah, there are others—of course," rejoined Alma, with a significant little smile; "and Fairbridge must seem dolefully dull after town."

But Beatrice was not disposed to complain of the dulness of this pretty old place, with its grey walls, its mellow red houses, its wealth of ivy and flowers. She liked the sunshiny calm of the ancient town; the leisurely way in which people went about their business; the slow, peaceful mode of life that prevailed here.

They came to the bridge, and paused for a minute to look down into the rapid brown stream, rushing under the arch. All along the banks, there was a purple mist of wild hyacinths and a fresh greenery of young leaves. A cuckoo, far off, uttered his sing-song call; and a thrush, close at hand, warbled loud and clear. And yet—

"There was something the season wanted,
Though the ways and the woods smelt sweet."

This was what Beatrice thought as she stood on the old grey bridge and watched the stream, with a remembering look in her deep eyes.

"Come," said Alma, after a brief silence: "we must not stay too long: Mr. Redburn is expecting you at home. I am very glad that

you like our town and its surroundings. To me, this dull old Fairbridge will always be the very dearest place in all the world."

A faint sigh followed the words, and again Beatrice fancied that she had at first misjudged her companion. A woman, who clung so fondly to old scenes and their associations, could not possibly be shallow and cold at heart.

It wanted only a few minutes to luncheon when they returned to Oak Lodge. Mr. Redburn, in his arm-chair by the fire, was fuming a little at Beatrice's absence, and Colonel Lindrick was good-naturedly trying to smooth his ruffled plumes.

"You have not yet said good-morning to me, my child," said the old man in a fretful tone, as Beatrice entered. "I have a great many things to say, and I expected to find you here when I came downstairs."

The girl stood before him, her soft, cream-tinted face fresh from the air and sunshine, her ripe lips parted in a slight smile. She seemed to be in no haste to make excuses for herself; and the Colonel, under the light of those deep blue eyes, was moved to take her part.

"Alma was determined to carry off Miss Ward after breakfast," he said, promptly. "My daughter has an exaggerated notion of the beauties of Fairbridge, and always wants her guests to admire the place. I dare say she has bored Miss Ward fearfully!"

"Do I look bored?" asked Beatrice, with dimpling cheeks. "You have no idea what a charming walk I have had!"

"It was quite difficult to get her away from the bridge," said Alma, putting her hand on Mr. Redburn's chair and bending over him; "but I did not forget you, and I reminded her that you were waiting for a long talk."

"You are always thoughtful for others," replied the old man, with a well-pleased glance. "My dear Beatrice, you must take lessons of Miss Lindrick. Remember that I shall want you after luncheon. We must have a serious, business-like conversation."

The girls ran away to take off their hats, and Alma gave Beatrice a sympathising nod and glance outside the door.

"Don't be afraid, the conversation won't last long," she whispered. "His liver makes him dreadfully sleepy, and he coughs if he talks too much. He will doze off after a few minutes, and then you will be free to come to Meadow House with me."

Miss Lindrick was quite right. Beatrice dutifully prepared herself to spend a weary afternoon by the invalid's arm-chair; but Mr. Redburn's drowsiness overpowered his desire to give her a long lecture. His eyelid's grew heavy, his words came slowly, and presently he dismissed her, and gave himself up to a long nap.

Her heart was beating fast when she walked down the chestnut avenue, and out into the sunny road that afternoon. She had taken pains with her dress, anxious to look her best in the eyes of Godwin's

people, although he was completely severed from them. Some day, she thought, they might learn to do him justice, and ask forgiveness for their cruelty. And—and—when the fact of his engagement came to their ears, they would remember that they had seen his betrothed and that she was by no means a person to be ashamed of.

With her mind full of these thoughts, she found herself in a long, low room, divided from a smaller room by folding doors. There were four French windows looking out on a terrace, and creepers and early roses clustered thickly round them. Within, the furniture had all the quaint, old-fashioned grace that belongs to a bygone age. There were a great deal of rare old china and a few choice cabinet pictures ; and in the atmosphere, there lingered the delicate sweetness of pot-pourri. To Beatrice it seemed, then and always, the prettiest old room that she had ever seen. And there rose up before her eyes a vision of a little slender boy, with fair hair, sitting on the floor in the sunshine and playing a quiet game in solitude. The boy was Godwin Earle, whose portrait, taken in childhood, was hanging on the wall.

Dorothy and Jane Earle had been very much alike in their young days : and now that they were old women the resemblance was more striking still. They had the same delicately-cut features, the same gentle eyes and silver hair. Both were tall, and both possessed that quiet air of distinction and refinement which marks the gentlewomen of the old school. They wore gowns of dove-coloured cashmere, soft and fine, and cambric kerchiefs, edged with real old lace, instead of ordinary collars. Everything about the pair was dainty and old-fashioned ; and you felt that their lives must always have been still and colourless, like themselves. They had had no struggles ; no strong hopes or haunting fears. The fitful fever of life had passed them by. They knew nothing of those heart conflicts and passionate yearnings that hurry other women to the end of their journey. With them, existence was a slow procession of tranquil days, marching smoothly onward to eternal rest.

They greeted Alma with genuine affection. She was a girl after their own hearts : discreet, well-bred, always unmoved by any passing events. She had shown just the proper amount of regret at giving up their unfortunate nephew, and had manifested, in a hundred pretty little ways, her desire to continue the old intimacy with his family.

And this was Miss Beatrice Ward, the girl who was looked upon as the adopted daughter of the rich Mr. Redburn !

A tall, graceful young woman, well formed and stately, although still in her teens. Beside her, Alma looked like a little, wintry, pink rose placed near a splendid Lamarque just bursting into creamy bloom. Beatrice had donned her best black cashmere gown and crowned her golden-brown head with a small black lace bonnet, perfect in its simplicity. She had chosen the style of dress best calculated to make her look dignified, and was childishly anxious to

produce a good impression. But of that inward anxiety, not the faintest trace appeared. She was so still and queenly that the old ladies were quite charmed with her high-bred air of repose.

Jane Earle, who was three years younger than Dorothy, was just a shade less placid than her sister. She found more things in the world to admire, and more to lament over than Dorothy ever did. This lovely girl, with the deep-coloured eyes and soft, crimson lips, awoke something like warm feeling in that calm bosom of hers. The fresh, full bloom of Beatrice stirred up half-forgotten thoughts of youth and love. She hovered round the girl as a bee hovers round a flower, and began to talk to her.

"You must find Fairbridge very quiet after life in town," she said, in her thin, pleasant voice.

"I think it a charming old place," Beatrice answered. "It is delightful to have one's fill of flowers and sunshine."

"I do not care for London, myself," said Aunt Jane; "and I really don't think I could live without my flowers—my sisters call them my nurslings. This is such a sheltered spot that we seldom lose any of our plants in winter. Summer comes early to us and lingers long."

"I can't imagine that storms ever visit Fairbridge," said Beatrice, with her girlish smile. "It seems to me to be something like the Lotus-eaters' paradise—if one lived here too long, one might sink into dreamy forgetfulness of busy life. At least, some people might."

"You would not, perhaps?" Jane said, smiling too. "The young like to see something of the world. I was never fond of gaiety, myself, but then I was rather delicate as a girl. I could not bear to be taken away from my greenhouses and garden."

Just then, Aunt Dorothy thought it proper to say a word to the new-comer. It was so seldom that any fresh face appeared in their circle that both the old ladies were really interested in Miss Ward.

"Miss Lindrick says that you were delighted with the view from our old bridge," she said, graciously. "It is very pretty, especially in spring; and it was in May that Birket Foster liked the scene best. We must show you his water-colour drawing, done on the very spot where you were standing this morning."

She rose, moved a few paces down the long room, and pointed out the picture hanging on the wall.

It was charming enough to have kept Beatrice spell-bound, if her eyes had not lighted on another picture suspended beside it. Out of an oval frame there looked a fair, boyish face, done in crayons by an artist's hand. There was almost a saintly sadness in the large, soft eyes; an expression too pathetic for a child's features; a look that, when seen in early youth, is often the foreshadowing of future sorrow.

If Beatrice had known that her composure was to be so sorely tried, she would never have entered Meadow House that day. At

the sight of this portrait, so like, and yet unlike, the man she loved with all the strength of her heart, her self-control almost deserted her. He had had just that look in his eyes when she had first seen him, standing on the line, exactly a year ago!

Miss Lindrick was watching her attentively. To a girl like Beatrice, she knew that the portrait would be a test. It must indeed be an uncommonly prosaic woman who can be quite unmoved by a likeness taken in childhood of the man she loves. Those soft lips, innocent of love-vows, how sweet they must have been! Even Alma, shallow-hearted as she was, had known some such thoughts and feelings as these.

"The blue hyacinth tints, mingling with the fresh green, are so lovely," Aunt Dorothy was saying. But she spoke to deaf ears. The girl's eyes were shining with a feverish light; her breast was heaving. In another moment her emotion would have been made painfully evident, had not fate interposed in the shape of the Countess Gradizoff.

Although she had a tall figure and regular features, the Countess was not like her sisters. About her there was more fulness and colour; her gowns rustled as theirs never did; her voice was louder and deeper-toned. She was considerably younger than Jane; her hair was a dark iron-grey. She wore no cap, and had a fashionable dress, made in the latest style; but, handsome as she was, there was none of that old-world dignity and grace that made Dorothy and Jane so charming. She was a woman who loved pomp and show as well as they loved refinement and retirement.

Her entrance had the effect of bringing Beatrice to her senses. Caroline Gradizoff was eager to see the future heiress, and greeted her with a gracious display of goodwill. She was keenly alive to Beatrice's beauty, and made up her mind at once that the girl was sure to be a great social success.

There was something in those hard eyes, looking shrewdly into hers, that nerved Beatrice to gather up her forces. She met the Countess with a quiet self-possession which rather surprised that domineering woman, who was accustomed to play the great lady in Fairbridge. Not one more glance did she venture to bestow on Godwin's portrait; and Alma, always furtively watching her, admitted that the girl had pulled herself together very well.

The last shadow of a doubt was now removed from Miss Lindrick's mind. She was quite convinced that Beatrice Ward loved Godwin Earle as deeply as ever woman loved. But was it a requited love? and were the pair only in the first stage of an attachment, or were they plighted lovers?

"She is absurdly romantic," thought Alma contemptuously. "Let Mr. Redburn forbid her to have anything to say to Godwin and she will fling his fortune in his face. Heroics are quite in her line."

As they were leaving the house, they met Olga Gradizoff returning from an afternoon walk. She was a heavy, uninteresting girl, and Beatrice scarcely gave her a thought. Almost in silence those two, Alma and Beatrice, walked back to Oak Lodge; and the latter slipped away, as soon as possible, to her own room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PORTRAIT.

THERE was a letter from Godwin the next morning. It came up to Beatrice's room with her early cup of tea; but not before the address had been seen and the handwriting recognised by Miss Lindrick.

Alma turned back to her pillow for a moment with a dull pain in her heart. She remembered the days, not so very long ago, when the sight of that handwriting had given her a little thrill of joy. And then there had been later days, when his letters had ruffled the smooth surface of her life and caused her some troubled moments of doubt and indecision. She was glad, on the whole, that the affair was ended; nor did she wish to mend the links that she had voluntarily broken. Yet it seemed heartless on his part to have consoled himself so soon. He had loved her so well that she had pictured him living a lonely life and forswearing the society of women for her sake.

Beatrice came down to breakfast with a sunshiny face, determined to bear with all Mr. Redburn's whims and make herself agreeable to everyone in the house. She looked so gloriously happy that Alma, for once in her life, very nearly betrayed the envy that was gnawing at her heart that day. Her morning greeting was a little chilly; her face looked old and worn when the fresh sunlight fell upon it, and Colonel Lindrick thought that his daughter was losing her youth very fast.

There was no walk after breakfast. Mr. Redburn took possession of Beatrice at once; and Alma left her to her fate. But she listened with perfect good-humour to the old man's prosy talk, and wrote some of his letters with the utmost cheerfulness. The world looked so bright just then that it was easy to endure any little nuisance. If Mr. Redburn were cross, why should she mind? He was old. He meant no unkindness by his little sour speeches. It was her duty to be tender and considerate to the poor old invalid who had been her father's friend.

At luncheon, Alma had quite recovered her spirits. The girls walked out in the afternoon, and came home across the sunny, park-like field that gave Meadow House its name.

The field path was a private way, trodden only by the Earles and their friends. It terminated in a narrow alley, hemmed in by shrubs,

and leading out into the high road ; and a gate in the laurel-hedge opened into the Earles' grounds.

At this little gate, Alma instinctively paused, being on such friendly terms with her neighbours that they were used to unceremonious meetings. Miss Lindrick was in a most unusually sentimental mood that day. She could not see the hawthorn snows drifting over the grass, nor smell the fresh, intoxicating sweetness of May, without a foolish longing to live old times over again. Here, at this very gate, she had been wont to meet Godwin in the bygone summer evenings when their hopes were high and their hearts young.

Lingering here, they could see the Countess sailing majestically across the lawn, carrying a red sun-shade, and heard her imperious voice calling to her daughter, who was playing with a kitten among the flower-beds. Under the verandah were Dorothy and Jane Earle ; the elder, with her knitting in her hands, the younger with a pair of scissors and a flower-basket. Showers of blossoms were falling from over-laden May boughs ; the sward was dappled with light shadows ; a warm breeze slowly swayed the fading golden tassels of the laburnum. Meadow House was a dreamy, sweet old place, half smothered with flowers and foliage, haunted by birds, steeped in calm and sunshine.

The Countess was the first to see the two loiterers at the gate. She came towards them ; large, stately, and warmly cordial.

"You surely are not going away without coming in !" she cried, with outstretched hand. "Miss Ward has not yet seen the garden, and it is looking so pretty now."

As she spoke, her eyes were keenly noting Beatrice's brown tweed suit, and criticising the fair face and tall figure. The two elder sisters, in their dove-coloured gowns, came gliding across the grass, and seconded her invitation.

Aunt Jane seemed disposed to attach herself to Beatrice, unconsciously frustrating the Countess's intentions, as she often did. If she had guessed that Caroline was bent upon engrossing the young girl's attention, she would have given her up meekly enough. But Jane had a perfectly innocent way of thwarting the Countess, and spoiled some of her best-laid little schemes all the more effectually, perhaps, because she did not know what she was doing. She felt a simple kind of pleasure in Beatrice's freshness and beauty, and liked to be near her, much as she liked to be in the neighbourhood of a rose.

"I want you to see my anemones," she said, in quite a confidential tone. "I have just been arranging them in a flower-dish and fringing them with fern. I do not care to leave all my flowers out of doors ; I like to have some of them in the room with me."

So saying, she led Miss Ward up the terrace steps, under the verandah, and into the long, low drawing-room. The anemones were worth looking at, delicate cups of the richest scarlet, pink, and

white, in a feathery setting of maidenhair. But there was something else that Beatrice was inwardly pining to see.

She praised the flowers and their arrangement to Jane's full content; and then asked, a little bashfully, if she might look again at that charming view of Birket Foster's, taken from the old bridge? Jane was well pleased to grant the request. These old gentlewomen were justly proud of their pictures; to appreciate any of their choice possessions was to stand high in their favour.

"I think it hangs in a good light," said the old lady, complacently leading the way to the drawing. "The colouring is very soft and delicate, is it not? And one can almost hear the rush of the stream!"

But Beatrice, although she managed to answer intelligently enough, could hear nothing but the loud throbbing of her own heart. And while she seemed to be gazing in rapt admiration at the picture, she did not, in truth, distinguish a single detail. Yet it was not until she had looked steadily at it for a reasonable time, that she ventured to glance at that crayon portrait, close by.

She was alone with Jane Earle. Dorothy and the Countess had taken possession of Alma, and were keeping her with them on the lawn, engaged in a long conversation. The opportunity was too good to be missed.

"That is a sweet boy's face," said Miss Ward, in a voice that trembled a little. And then she gave herself up to the pleasure of gazing her fill. "The eyes are beautiful; but there is a sadness in them that one seldom sees in the eyes of a child."

"He was a happy child enough, but his eyes always had that look," replied Aunt Jane, with a faint sigh. "I remember that some people used to fancy he would not live to grow up."

"But he did live?"

"Oh, yes; he is a man now. But not a very happy man, I am afraid."

Aunt Jane, too, was looking at the portrait, with more expression in her delicate old face than was often seen there. And Beatrice recollected that Godwin had loved Aunt Jane better than any of his other relations, always excepting poor Grace Corder, who died.

CHAPTER XVI.

REMINISCENCES.

"It is a grave matter to bring up a boy," said Jane Earle, after a brief pause. "That portrait was done when Godwin was about seven years old. He was our poor brother's only child—the sweetest little fellow that ever was! I remember him, with his fair hair and gentle face, playing quietly in this very room, or sitting at my feet and

asking for a story. The dearest little companion he always was to me!"

"How you must have loved him!" The words escaped from Beatrice unawares.

"I did love him. Even now, I cannot look at that picture without wishing that he could come back, a little innocent lad, just as he was then! Is it not Cowper who says:

'The meek intelligence of those dear eyes?'

It isn't the fashion to admire Cowper nowadays, I dare say, but he chimes in with my old-fashioned mode of expression. I don't often quote poetry, yet the line seems to describe the look in that portrait."

It was seldom indeed that Jane Earle was betrayed into making such a long speech. But, from the first moment of their meeting, she had been drawn towards Beatrice and felt a sense of ease in her presence. All her life, Jane had been one of those women whose lot it is to be suppressed. She had never had nerve enough to assert herself and her opinions. Moreover, she had always regarded herself as a weak person, who needed guidance. Caroline was the clever woman of the family, and they must all submit to Caroline's superior mind.

"I am sure you must care for him still," said Beatrice, trying to speak composedly. "And he must care for you—he can never forget you."

"We seldom talk of him," Jane answered, with a hurried glance towards the group on the lawn. "He is under a cloud. Things did not go well with him, and we could not help him, poor boy! There was something between him and Alma once—I think it must have been a painful parting. But we must let bygones be bygones—they are all coming in!"

They were indeed. Dorothy, sedate and obtuse as usual; the Countess, with inquisitive tongue; Alma, with her watchful glances; and Olga bringing up the rear with the kitten.

"Why have you been keeping Miss Ward indoors?" Caroline Gradizoff demanded. "Now, that is so like you, Jane! When flowers are growing out in the air and sunshine, people do not care to be shut up in a room to stare at your nosebags. You have a mania for picking things, and sticking them into jars and dishes, and then calling upon everybody to admire your tasteful arrangement!"

"Miss Jane's flowers are perfectly charming," said Beatrice, resenting the tone and manner of the Countess's speech.

Even Dorothy, obtuse as she was, could not help wishing that Caroline would not speak in that way to Jane before strangers. It might give people the impression that there was discord in the Earle family. And she was anxious to appear in a good light before this beautiful girl, who would be a rich woman some day, and might perhaps become a neighbour. Caroline was too trying.

She touched the bell for tea, and began to draw Beatrice into conversation. They all hoped that Miss Ward would make a long stay; there were a great many pretty views to be seen yet. The archery meeting would be coming off soon. Was she fond of archery?

So the old lady babbled pleasantly on, and Beatrice gave fairly correct answers to her various questions, although her mind was straying far away from the talk.

At last, when there was a little lull, she became distinctly conscious that Aunt Dorothy was saying something very important to Miss Lindrick. "I hope, Alma, that you will fix an evening to dine with us. We shall be so glad to see Miss Ward. I suppose Mr. Redburn is too great an invalid to come out, and perhaps the Colonel cannot leave him. But you two will come, I trust?"

"Indeed we should be delighted to come," Alma responded, "if Mr. Redburn would only be reasonable. But he is very exacting, and does not like Beatrice to go out of his sight."

"You must not yield to old people too much," said Dorothy, with a little air of wisdom. "They are often very inconsiderate to the young. We really must have you both here one evening soon. There are many little things that will amuse Miss Ward, I think. The old engravings and all the albums, you know."

"Ah, yes; the dear old albums," said Alma, with a faint sigh. "It seems only yesterday since Godwin and I were turning over their leaves together! How we used to amuse ourselves with the quaint water-colour drawings, all of the most sentimental description! There was a lady in pink bending over a balcony to kiss her hand to a cavalier in green. Poor Godwin used to laugh at the pair."

An awful pause followed these strangely indiscreet words. Alma was perfectly aware that Godwin's name was never mentioned nowadays in the presence of the Countess Gradizoff. But all her usual tact seemed suddenly to have fled.

"You still have a portfolio of his drawings, have you not?" Miss Lindrick continued, addressing the aunts generally. "There was that sketch done in the garden, with Olga standing between the clipped yews. I think he gave it to the Countess. It was very pretty indeed."

Caroline gave a slight shudder, and began to trifle nervously with a paper-knife.

"I don't know where his drawings are," she said, tightening her lips. "Jane has put them somewhere, I suppose. The sight of them would be too painful to me."

"Ah, yes; I was forgetting," rejoined Alma, with a sigh.

The entrance of the servant broke an awkward silence. Beatrice's first draught of tea nearly choked her. She was burning to defend her lover—burning to tell them all that they had disgraced themselves by harbouring cruel suspicions against him. As to the Countess Gradizoff, the girl could hardly conceal her aversion to that hard,

overbearing woman, who had driven Godwin away from the shelter of his old home.

She was heartily glad when Alma rose to say good-bye. Aunt Jane's placid face was not quite as calm as usual when she saw them depart. Her gentle old heart was disquieted within her that day.

The two young women went almost in silence across the velvet lawn, although Olga, who accompanied them, chattered gaily until they reached the shrubbery gate. Then, with many adieux, she ran back to the house, and Alma and Beatrice were left in the perfumed gloom of the laurel walk.

"I am sure you are tired, poor child," said Miss Lindrick at last. "Do you want to go indoors just yet? Mr. Redburn is on the watch, I fear. Let us go and sit in the old summer-house at the bottom of the garden; it is a nice cushiony place, and you can rest there."

Beatrice was afraid that she was destined to hear some unpleasant things in that old summer-house. Of course, Alma shared the belief in Godwin's guilt. But she could not very well refuse the invitation; and so, slowly and gravely, she accompanied Miss Lindrick down the long garden path.

The little bower, with its conical thatched roof and rough wooden walls, was wreathed with ivy and flowering creepers. Through an opening in the larches that grow thickly here, you could catch a glimpse of a church spire, and the slopes of distant hills: a fair picture, delicately framed in quivering foliage. All around the arbour, the sweet common flowers of early summer were in the freshest bloom: great velvety pansies; bloody-warriors standing up in stiff ranks; flowering currant-bushes scenting the air with their delicious country fragrance. It was a pleasant nook to rest in on a sunny afternoon; but Beatrice's throbbing pulses were at war with repose.

The summer-house was cushioned as Alma had said, but her companion was in no mood to recognise its comforts. She seated herself, and looked absently at the larch-boughs, showing their fine outlines against the fair sky.

"Poor Godwin Earle," said Alma, breaking the silence in a gentle voice; "he is an acquaintance of yours, is he not?"

"I know him very well," was the somewhat curt reply.

"Ah, I remember seeing him with you and some friends of yours. But, of course, I did not know that you were intimate with him. His aunts do not like talking about him much, poor fellow! I fancy he has given the old ladies a perpetual heartache."

"I can't believe that the Countess Gradizoff has ever had a heartache," replied Beatrice, coldly; "and Miss Earle and Miss Jane seemed very comfortable, I thought."

"You do not know them as well as I do," Alma said, mournfully. "I have seen them suffer a great deal on his account. But I am the last person in the world to be hard on Godwin. He was very dear to me once, and I was his first love."

She paused ; but Beatrice had nothing to say.

"His first love," she repeated pensively. "He will never love another woman as he loved me. We were boy and girl together, and everyone said that we were made for each other in those days."

"But not in these days !" said Beatrice, with a little smile.

"No." Alma did not love her any the better for that smile. "It is rather more than a year since I broke off the engagement. Circumstances compelled me to give him up."

"I daresay you acted wisely," remarked Miss Ward, in an indifferent tone.

"I hope he has found friends and an occupation." Alma was becoming more and more exasperated, although her self-control was perfect. "But if he has made money—and papa thinks that he has—he ought to send some to the Countess Gradizoff. She had a very heavy loss through him. I almost wondered to see him looking well and happy last summer ; there must be a burden on his mind, I suppose. But I could not understand his apparent cheerfulness."

"You thought he ought not to be cheerful, perhaps ?"

"Well, it seems hard to say that. Yet, if I were in his case, I could not enjoy life till I had made a certain act of restitution."

"He will make it ; he is devoting all his energies to getting money. The Countess will be fully compensated for the loss of the necklace."

"Oh, then you know the story of the necklace," said Alma, with a hard look coming suddenly into her face. "That means, of course, that you have heard his version of it ?"

Beatrice's temper got the better of her at last. The bitterness in Alma's voice, the base insinuation conveyed in her words, were more than Godwin Earle's betrothed could bear with patience.

She drew herself up haughtily, looking a magnificent embodiment of youth and vigour, and dwarfing into insignificance the pinched face and figure by her side.

"I have heard the truth," she answered, proudly. "I know that he has been the most unfortunate and most unjustly accused of men. The people here may say and think what they choose, but they will never shake my faith in my promised husband !"

"Oh, I was not aware that there was an engagement," said Alma, with a polite little sneer. "If I had known, I should, of course, have been on my guard. But you are young ; and it would have been wiser, perhaps, if you had heard both sides of that painful story."

"I am perfectly satisfied," returned Beatrice, coldly ; and she rose without another word and turned towards the house.

As she walked steadily up that long garden path, her eyes were dazzled by the low sunlight. The vivid gold on shrubs and bushes smote her almost painfully after the soft shade of the arbour ; and the scents of wallflowers and sweetbriar had lost their sweetness. It

seemed as if a great deal had happened in that afternoon ; although in truth nothing fresh had come to her, save a new revelation of cruel injustice.

She was glad that Alma walked behind her in silence. Any words spoken at that moment between these two women must have been bitter words.

Shadows were beginning to creep about Beatrice's young life—to creep higher and higher till they reached her heart and rested there for many a day. She did not doubt, for one moment, the man she had trusted ; but she had begun to realise, for the first time, that nothing on earth has so many foes as a true love.

CHAPTER XVII.

COLONEL LINDRICK SPEAKS OUT.

A LITTLE quiet time in her own room and the business of dressing for dinner restored Beatrice's composure in some degree. She went downstairs in her pretty, soft silk gown, resolved to make the best of things while she was a guest at Oak Lodge, and equally resolved that her stay here should be as short as possible.

Her efforts to make everything agreeable were bravely seconded by her hostess. Both girls talked brightly all through dinner. The two old men were charmed with Beatrice's intelligence ; Alma, herself, secretly applauded the girl for her spirit. The evening passed off exceedingly well, and Beatrice retired early that she might write her letters in solitude.

Mr. Redburn had been accommodated with a bed-room and dressing-room on the most sheltered side of the house. A good deal of the morning was generally spent in the dressing-room, where he breakfasted, wrapped in a luxurious Oriental robe, and idled away his time, in invalid fashion, till the luncheon hour. If the morning was showery, or if there was an east wind, his servant carried refreshments upstairs, and the old man did not appear till later in the day.

It was no surprise to Mr. Redburn to see his host enter the dressing-room after breakfast with his hands full of morning papers. Colonel Lindrick thoroughly understood the art of managing invalids. He always had something cheerful to say, some bit of news to tell, some good story to amuse the weary sufferer. Tough and wiry himself, and used to all sorts of climates, he could endure the atmosphere of a close room without much discomfort. His nerves, too, were excellent, enabling him to bear the frequent fits of coughing with perfect equanimity and indifference.

"Splendid weather for you to-day," he said, coming over to the wrapped-up figure in the cushioned chair, just as the dutiful Blake was taking away the remains of the solitary breakfast. "The softest

of westerly winds, hardly enough to set the leaves quivering. You must get out for a little walk in the sun. I see you are looking much better."

"I am better," old Redburn admitted. "The air of this place suits me very well."

"Oh, you are picking up fast; Bendall finds a great improvement," said Colonel Lindrick airily, while Blake carried the tray out of the room and shut the door. "Not much in the paper, is there?"

"Not much. Yes, I certainly do feel stronger," said the old man, returning to the beloved topic of his health. "I've had a good night, and my cough is quieter. As you say, a walk in the sun will do me good. Beatrice must come with me, and we will potter about on the lawn before luncheon."

"Ah, yes, Beatrice is a charming companion," Colonel Lindrick said in his pleasant way. "How well she talked last night; has read a great deal, hasn't she? Do you know, by the way, that Alma made a discovery yesterday?"

"What did she discover? Anything to do with Beatrice?"

"Very much to do with her. Girls never can keep their secrets long from each other, you know; and Alma, poor little woman, is quite concerned. She is afraid she has offended Beatrice by speaking slightly of her lover."

"Beatrice has no lover. She is a mere baby."

"A very fine baby," said the Colonel, laughing. "We could not expect her to keep free from dangles. But, seriously, I wish she had engaged herself to a worthier man."

"Engaged herself!" repeated the old man, furiously. "Why wasn't I told of this sooner? Engaged! What could that Milton woman have been doing?"

"Don't be angry, Redburn," his friend said soothingly. "It is right, of course, that you should know all about the affair. Alma told me everything last night. She is very fond of Beatrice, and really anxious for her good."

"Begin at the beginning, Lindrick," cried Redburn impatiently. "In the first place, let me know who the man is? And how did he cross her path?"

"I can answer the first question, but not the second. The man is an old lover of my daughter's. At my request, she dropped him altogether last year. His name is Earle—Godwin Earle—nephew of the old ladies in Meadow House."

"And, after being dropped by your daughter, he comes sneaking up to Beatrice, does he? What do you know about him?"

"I don't want to injure him," replied the Colonel, in a reluctant tone; "but it is only fair to tell you why I made Alma cut him. She is a sensible girl, and gave me no trouble in the matter."

And then followed the story of the missing necklace, told in Colonel Lindrick's brief, effective style. Such a tale, narrated in such a manner, could have but one effect on a man who had already resolved that Beatrice should have no husband who was not of his choosing.

"Miss Ward is young, even for her nineteen years," ended the Colonel, in a kindly voice. "She has never seen anything of the world. Is it any wonder that she believes implicitly in the first man who makes love to her?"

"She will have to give him up," said Mr. Redburn, shortly. "I won't look on and let her make a fool of herself."

"It will not be easy to influence her. She is as high-spirited as she is beautiful. I have never seen a girl I admire so much. By George, if I were thirty years younger, I would go in for her myself!"

"I wish to heaven that you *were* thirty years younger! It would take a great deal to make me cast off poor Ward's daughter, after having made up my mind to adopt her. But I swear to you, Lindrick, that not one shilling of mine shall ever go to a man with a stained name! Her father, poor fellow, would have soon put a stop to this affair if he had lived."

"I can only hope that she will listen to reason. Poor Alma's words had no weight with her at all," said the Colonel, shaking his head.

"She ought to have frankly told me that she had a lover," muttered the old man, fretfully. "Her father's oldest friend and representative was to be kept in the dark, it seems! The Miltons have not done their duty. They must have looked after her very badly."

"Don't say that to her, Redburn. If you do, she will be as hard to move as a rock. Why, she simply worships that woman who was her governess! Alma says that Mrs. Milton's influence is unbounded. It is a pity, a great pity, that she has not had another kind of training."

These words added fuel to the flame of Mr. Redburn's wrath. He was already jealous of Beatrice's attachment to Harriet. His was the ungovernable, unreasoning jealousy of the autocrat who wants to order all things with an omnipotent hand and hates the shadow of a rival power. Living for years in almost kingly style among a conquered people, he had yet to learn that it was possible for his commands to be disobeyed.

"I shall not let the child take her own way unchecked!" he cried. "I shall say just the things that ought to be said! Bless my soul, Lindrick, do you suppose I am going to be silenced by a Miss in her teens? Eh? What? Upon my soul! It's monstrous, sir; monstrous. The whole thing is brought about by the devilish mismanagement of those Miltons! And I'm not to mention them, I suppose? I'm to hold my tongue out of deference to my lady?"

Do you know what you are talking about? I shall speak my mind, sir; I shall speak my —— ”

A violent fit of coughing put an end to this tirade. And it occurred to Colonel Lindrick that his friend would not have many more opportunities of speaking his mind if he went on at that rate. He immediately began to put out all his powers of soothing.

“It will all come right,” he said, reassuringly. “She does not know her own heart yet. Girls of her age change their lovers twenty times a-year. Let her see more of men, more of the world and its ways; that is the best cure for sentimental nonsense of any kind. I am half sorry that I came here and worried you about the matter.”

“You—could not—have—done otherwise.” Mr. Redburn panted out the sentence with a great effort.

“Well, well, I did what I thought best. Alma thought I ought to speak, and she is a clear-headed girl. Naturally, she does not like to look calmly on and see her young friend getting deeper and deeper into a muddle. But it will be all right, I tell you; all right.”

“I wish Beatrice had a tenth part of Alma’s common sense,” said Mr. Redburn, somewhat calmed.

“Ah, there are very few women who have such a respect for a father’s judgment as Alma has. Even from a child, she would always let herself be guided. I left her in my sister’s care while I was in India; and I must say she was admirably trained. No heroics, no high-flown ideas. She has never given me a moment’s anxiety.”

“You are a lucky man to have such a daughter. By Jove, Lindrick, I wish I had married and had a child of my own. It’s poor work, making money and leaving it to hospitals and that sort of thing. More satisfactory, you know, to leave it to a pretty young woman, if she will only behave herself properly.”

“But not satisfactory, you know, to leave it to a young man who has not behaved himself properly? If you left it to her, in her present frame of mind, you would be leaving it to him too.”

“He shall never touch a shilling of my mine! Upon my soul, Lindrick, I’d rather be —— ”

“Of course, of course! Very right and natural. Now, take my advice; just quiet yourself, and then come down and call Beatrice to walk with you in the garden. You’ll bring her to her senses, never fear.”

“Do you really think so? Do you think she is seriously in love with that confounded rascal?”

“Do I think any girl of nineteen is ever seriously in love? Introduce fifty more confounded rascals to her, and if they happened to be fairly good-looking, she would be sweet upon everyone of them. Earle is the only man she has ever seen much of. As yet, no one has tried to put him out of her head. Upon my word, Redburn, I had no idea that you were going to regard this little affair so gravely.”

So saying, Colonel Lindrick rose and went away, leaving the old

man to believe that he had an easy task before him. Outside the door, his face changed and grew haggard and worn in a moment. His daughter met him in the corridor, and they paused together at one of the windows, speaking in low voices and with cautious glances around.

"Are you sure of her firmness, Alma?" asked the Colonel, anxiously.

"Quite sure, papa. She is the most obstinate girl I have ever known. Nothing on earth will make her give Godwin up. She does not care for money in the least. I never saw anyone so extraordinary!"

"She will have to choose between her lover and a fortune, Alma. I am certain of that."

"She will not hesitate a moment. And if Mr. Redburn provokes her too far, she will run away."

"He will provoke her to any extent," said the Colonel, grimly. "You must not let her see any change in your manner, remember."

"Whatever happens, I am going to be sweet and sympathising. But I shall be very glad when all this is over, and she is really gone, never to come back anymore. It is a wearisome business."

"But we shall reap the fruits by-and-bye. You are looking tired, Alma; keep up your spirits. You will know what to do with old Redburn's money when it comes to you."

"I shall know how to take care of it," said Alma, quietly.

No one who had seen the tight shutting of Miss Lindrick's lips and marked the hard outlines of her aquiline nose and prominent chin would have doubted her ability to take care of money. And certainly no man, however near and dear to her, would ever succeed in luring her into spendthrift ways. In her hands, Mr. Redburn's fortune would be safe indeed.

Just then, a bell was heard to ring in the invalid's room; and father and daughter parted in haste. Blake was summoned to dress his master.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT OAK LODGE.

THE birds were twittering, chattering and fluttering about the flowery boughs in Colonel Lindrick's garden, and Beatrice was pacing up and down the walks with a musing look on her face. A night's sleep had restored her spirits, but it had by no means quenched the burning desire to leave Fairbridge and return to town. The songs of the birds and the peace and beauty of the sunshine and the hour stole into the girl's heart and made her feel that it was good to live. And yet—

"The cuckoo-throb, the heart-beat of the spring;
The rose-bud's blush that leads it as it grows
Into the full-eyed, fair, unblushing rose;"

all this delight and sweetness were incomplete without the companionship that was most to be desired on earth.

"Mr. Redburn is asking for you," said Alma, breaking in upon her solitude with an apologetic smile. "I am so sorry to disturb you ; I see that you are reading."

But Beatrice, although an open book was in her hand, had not read a single line. She smiled back at Alma, and obeyed the unwelcome summons with a good grace.

As she came up the walk with sunbeams and leaf-shadows flickering over her face and figure, the two old men stood watching her on the lawn. Both were struck with that girlish dignity of hers ; both estimated at its full value the morning freshness of her beauty.

"It would be a thousand pities for such a girl to throw herself away on Earle," whispered the Colonel to his friend. "It must not be !—by Jove, it must not be !"

"It *shall* not be," was the answer, in a low growl of determination.

"I shall take her in hand at once, Lindrick, and put an end to all that preposterous nonsense for ever."

Beatrice wondered what was meant by "preposterous nonsense?"

She had caught the two words, but did not guess that they were applied to any affair of hers. Looking quietly happy after her saunter among the flowers, she came towards Mr. Redburn with a pleasant good-morning.

"Good-morning, my dear," he responded, rather gruffly ; "you and I are going to take a little stroll about the grounds and have a talk—a very serious talk."

Even then she did not in the least suspect the subject of that very serious talk. She moved on contentedly, walking by his side, with her well-set head lifted a little, listening to the birds' songs ; and his shambling old figure serving as a foil to her stateliness and grace.

"Beatrice," he began solemnly ; "attention, my dear, if you please."

She had lifted her hand to a sweet-briar bush to pull off a twig, but at these words she let it drop meekly at her side and turned her sweet face towards him with a deferential air.

"Beatrice, I received a communication this morning which has surprised and annoyed me beyond measure. Yesterday, it seems, you openly announced the fact of your engagement ; an engagement which must fill every well-wisher of yours with the deepest regret."

He paused, feeling that he had made a good beginning and expressed himself with calmness and dignity. She was startled for a moment ; it had not occurred to her that Miss Lindrick would repeat their conversation to Mr. Redburn. But, after all, why should he be kept in ignorance of a thing that he would have to know sooner or later ? She answered him in a tone of perfect composure :

"I am sorry that anyone should regret my happiness."

"Your happiness! By George, Beatrice, this is too much for any man to stand! Your happiness, indeed! Do you think you are going to be made happy by marrying a rascal? Do you think I will look on and see poor Ward's daughter fling herself away on a thief? Do you suppose ——"

"Stop!" she said, her clear young voice ringing out imperiously above his thick, angry tones. "Stop, if you don't wish me to forget the respect due to my father's old friend."

She was as white as marble. Her deep-blue eyes, heavily fringed with dark-brown lashes, shone out strangely. There was such a queenliness in her look and tone that for an instant the old tyrant was cowed before her.

But only for an instant. His wrath burst out again, all the hotter for that momentary repression.

"How dare you, you insolent child!" he shouted. "If your father were here at this moment, he would order you away to your room and lock you up till you would listen to reason. But you shan't ruin yourself if I can help it. You shall hear all that there is to be said about that scoundrel, who has deluded you with his lying tales."

He stopped, not for want of words, but for want of breath. She took advantage of the pause to speak, quietly and coldly.

"Mr. Redburn, I am not ungrateful for your kind intentions. But let me say now, once for all, that it will be best for you to forget my very existence. Let us tread separate ways. If we meet often, we shall only irritate each other. You cannot reasonably expect to order my life after such a short acquaintance."

"That's true," he answered, with unexpected calmness. "I ought to have come home sooner to have looked after poor Ward's child. It serves me right if she gives herself airs. Now, look here, Beatrice. I'm ready to have patience with you. But you musn't fly into a rage when I say that these Milton people are awfully to blame. They let you engage yourself to the first man who was caught by your pretty face. What did they know of this fellow Earle?"

"He was introduced to them by Mr. Milton's oldest friend—a Mr. Corder. Mr. Corder's son married a Miss Earle," replied Beatrice, with cold distinctness.

"Oh, indeed. And did the Miltons ever hear the story of the Countess Gradizoff's ruby necklace?"

"No. But Godwin Earle told the whole story, first to Mr. Corder and afterwards to me."

"You poor deluded baby! He told the tale after his own fashion. As Alma Lindrick says, you have heard only one side."

"Mr. Redburn, let me say again that it will be best for us to part," said the girl, struggling hard for composure. "Do not let us talk about this matter any more. To the last day of my life, I shall believe in Godwin's innocence, whether that innocence is proved not. Nothing will ever change me."

The old man's face looked sadly drawn and haggard in the fresh light of morning. Absurd and unreasonable as his expectations were, he had in truth expected the obedience of a daughter from Beatrice Ward. Finding her so fresh and fair, he had centred all his hopes in her, and she had become, as the Lindricks well knew, the great interest in his fast-declining life.

"Let me go back to my home," she continued, gently. "Why should I stay here and quarrel with you? You don't understand me; you can't realise how miserable it is to live with people who believe these cruel untruths about the man I love. Forget me, and find some other girl who will be grateful for your benefits and submissive to your will. I am not submissive, and I can't even be grateful."

While she was speaking, a new expression had dawned in the eyes that were closely watching her. A sudden thought had flashed into the old man's brain. He could now see such a clear light shining on the difficulty that he could afford to speak in an indulgent tone.

"I can't so easily resign my adopted daughter," he said, with an affectionate air that touched her. "For the present, however, we will let this subject rest. I am a shattered old man, and have to pay dearly for exciting myself. Now I shall go to my room and try to get composed. You will not see me at luncheon."

He turned away, leaving her under a hawthorn that shed its fragrant snows upon her head. Standing in the shade, and following him with pitying eyes, she saw him go pottering towards the house with all possible speed. How feeble he was, and how cruel it seemed to put him into a passion! She was ready to blame herself for losing her temper with anyone so sickly and frail.

A distant clock struck eleven. It was good to know that she might count upon two whole hours of solitude and peace.

Turning her back to the house, she went quickly down the flowery path that led to the old summer-house. Here, indeed, there was perfect quietness and repose, but after sitting still for a few seconds, she remembered that Alma might come in search of her. In her present mood, an interview with her hostess was the very thing that she could not bear with patience. If Alma had but kept silence, this painful scene with Mr. Redburn might have been spared her.

Just outside the summer-house was a gate which opened out upon the high road. It was locked; but the key was in the lock, and in a moment more Beatrice was beyond the Lindricks' grounds and at liberty.

The May morning was as warm as many a day in June. She went on and on, exulting in the air and sunlight, and making straight for that narrow lane which would lead her to the ivy-grown bridge. Here she paused, finding a strange charm in the spot, and resting her arms on the mossy brickwork, she looked down thoughtfully into the waters that went hurrying along below.

The stream seemed to murmur to her of a time when a boy's feet

had paused there and a boy's heart had danced to its music. The freshness of its song was unchanged, the merry rush of its waters was as gladsome as ever ; but the laughter that used to blend with its tone was gone.

In those bygone days of his bright youth, she had not known Godwin Earle. It had been reserved for her to meet the way-worn, weary man, and bless him with the full sweetness of a woman's first love. And so true and deep was this love of hers, that she craved of heaven no higher boon than to walk always by his side to the journey's end.

On each side of the stream were the wooded banks, rich with the purple and gold of May-time and fresh with glorious green. It was lovely to see the soft spots of colour showing here and there among long grass and drooping boughs—lovely to watch the lights flashing on the hasty tide. The song of the waters and the charm of the place soothed her troubled spirit and gave her peace.

She was moving slowly on again, when a tall, elderly lady, carrying a basket full of cowslips, came to meet her with a placid smile. It startled her a little to find herself face to face with Jane Earle. But one glance at that undisturbed countenance assured her that Aunt Jane had heard nothing unusual. She had been taking a morning walk in the lanes and meadows, and was returning laden with spoils.

"I am enjoying this early summer-time," said the old lady, contentedly. "Did you ever see such a wealth of cowslips as we have this year ? And they are so fine, too ?"

"Beautiful," replied Beatrice, bending over the basket. But she was not thinking of the yellow flowers that breathed sweetly on her face. She was wondering at Aunt Jane's unbroken serenity. How could she find life so pleasant when the boy whom she had loved was banished from his home for ever ?

"You would have missed all this sweetness if you had stayed in town," continued Jane, cheerfully. "Are you not very glad to be here ?"

But the question, coming at that moment, was more than Beatrice could bear.

Giving one hasty glance at the speaker, she suddenly burst into tears, and sobbed out a passionate answer.

"Oh, no, no ! I wish that I had never left London. I wish—with all my soul—that I could go home this very day !"

"My dear Miss Ward, forgive me—pray forgive me," said the old lady, in pained surprise. "I had no idea that my words would give such distress."

(To be continued.)

A REVERIE.

THE glory of a summer moon
 Shed all her silver on the night,
 On woods that wore the wealth of June,
 And lordly turrets tipped with light ;
 A hush was in the hazelbrake,
 And if a murmur met the ear,
 'Twas where the lily-fleeted lake
 Dashed foaming down the whitened weir.

A mantled iris spanned
 The moss-greened gulf and lichens grey ;
 Dark cedar groves on either hand,
 Were sprinkled with the opal spray ;
 A mist from off the pine-clad hills
 Stole like a sheeted spectre by ;
 The dewy breath of daffodils
 Came from a kine-cropped pasture nigh.

An aspen on the terrace walk
 Found not a breath to fan its leaves ;
 The night is still ; no spirits talk
 Beneath the ivied arbour eaves ;
 The sighing of the reeds, at most,
 Was all the listener could discern,
 Although he knew an antlered host
 Was ambushed in the scented fern.

The night is still, all nature sleeps,
 Her tent the turquoise-tinted skies ;
 Few stars are forth—the azure deeps
 Unveil them not to mortal eyes ;
 A solemn Presence seems to pass
 Along the silent realms of space ;
 Unseen, unheard, unknown, alas !
 To beings of a fallen race.

I passed from out the festive halls
 To gaze upon a fairer scene,
 And linger on the loopholed walls,
 Where musingly I loved to lean ;
 To commune with the quiet night,
 And yield to its entrancing power,
 And, pacing the embattled height,
 Breathe all the beauty of the hour.

LINDON MEADOWS.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"OH, GERTRUDE! DON'T SAY ME NAY AGAIN!"